

# FIRST THINGS

EUROPE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Pope Benedict XVI

POLITICS AFTER EDEN

Walter D. Mignolo

THE SPIRIT OF ABSTRACT ART

Jonas Valiunas

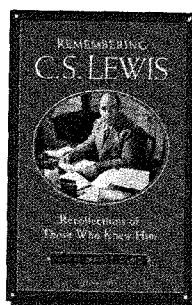
THE DESIGNS OF SCIENCE

Christoph Cardinal Schönborn

ALSO: Robert George on G.E.M. Anscombe •  
Kevin M. Schultz on the 50th anniversary of *Protestant-  
Catholic-Jew* • Allen C. Guelzo on providence, prudence,  
and Abraham Lincoln • Jerry Walls on the afterlife

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Richard John Neuhaus

# NARNIA AND BEYOND



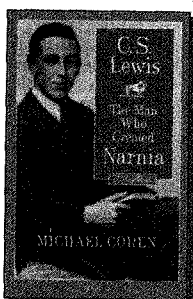
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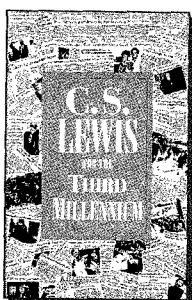
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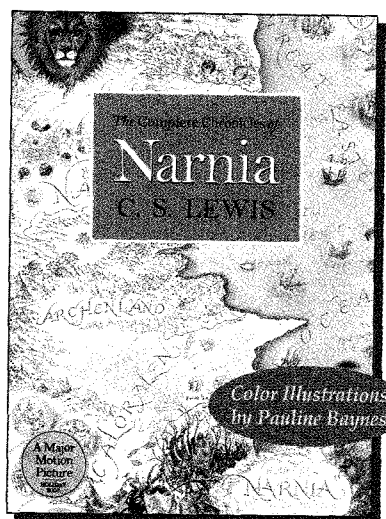


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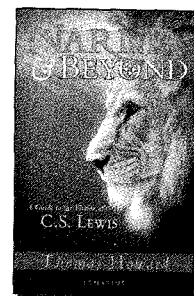
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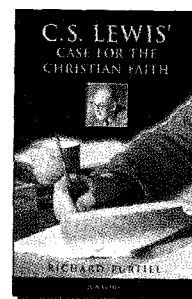
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# FIRST THINGS

January 2006 • Number 159

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## CORRESPONDENCE

- 2 Randomness and Intelligent Design; Debating Darfur;  
Populating Europe; Much Ado About Nothing

---

## OPINION

- Allen C. Guelzo* 11 The Prudence of Abraham Lincoln  
*Terry Eastland* 13 God and Man at Davidson

---

## ARTICLES

- Benedict XVI* 16 Europe and Its Discontents  
*Kevin M. Schultz* 23 Protestant-Catholic-Jew, Then and Now  
*Algis Valiunas* 28 Spirit in the Abstract  
*Christoph Cardinal Schönborn* 34 The Designs of Science

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## BOOKS

- Dermot Quinn* 39 The Narnian by Alan Jacobs  
*Gilbert Meilaender* 42 The Ways of Judgment by Oliver O'Donovan  
*Edward T. Oakes* 49 Sweet Dreams by Daniel C. Dennett  
*Jerry L. Walls* 52 Life After Death by Alan F. Segal  
*Robert P. George* 56 Human Life, Action, and Ethics by G.E.M. Anscombe  
59 Briefly Noted

---

## THE PUBLIC SQUARE

- Richard John Neuhaus* 61 More on Bible Babel, "Are Jews Smarter?", etc.

---

## POETRY

Greg Williamson (22), David Middleton (27), William Conelly (33), Daniel Waters (38)

---

FIRST THINGS (ISSN #1047-5141) is published monthly (except for combined issues June/July and August/September) for \$39 per year (\$14.97 for students) by the Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: send address changes to FIRST THINGS, P.O. Box 401, Mt. Morris, IL 61054. Editorial Offices: The Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010. Editorial Phone: (212) 627-1985. Email: [ft@firstthings.com](mailto:ft@firstthings.com). Website: <http://www.firstthings.com>. Advertising Offices: 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108. Advertising Phone: (815) 398-8569. Email: [firstthingsadsales@pma-inc.net](mailto:firstthingsadsales@pma-inc.net). Subscription Department: P.O. Box 401, Mt. Morris, IL 61054. Subscription Phone: (877) 905-9920. Email: [frth@kable.com](mailto:frth@kable.com). Unsolicited material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient return postage. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., One Media Way, 12406 Rt. 250, Milan, OH 44846. Copyright © 2005 by the Institute on Religion and Public Life. All rights reserved. Produced in the USA.

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FIRST THINGS is published by Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society.

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## Randomness and Intelligent Design

The controversy resulting from Cardinal Schönborn's opinion article in the *New York Times* has engaged, among others, faithful and well-informed Catholics who nonetheless disagree with each other on matters of substance. In his criticism of Cardinal Schönborn's statement ("The Design of Evolution," October), Stephen Barr was right, I believe, to focus on two crucial points: the relation between finality or purpose and the modern scientific method, and the meaning of randomness. Yet, at the risk of temerity, I will say that Barr's article adds to the confusion that prevails when these two points are discussed.

In Barr's example of shuffled cards, he concludes: "The scientist and the poker player do not look at things from God's point of view, however, and so they talk about 'probabilities.'" Precisely. And that is why "random genetic variations" are "foreseen" from God's point of view and have determinate causes. It is only because the scientist is unable to discover or track the causes that he terms an event "random." And what the scientist predicts in terms of probabilities are really unknown (to him) certainties.

It won't help to invoke Laplace, claiming that his universal determinism and the Newtonian physics that underlie it have been superseded. It is a philosophical (not theological) principle that every event must have a cause. And Cardinal Schönborn is entirely correct in quoting with approval John Paul II: "To speak of chance... would be equivalent to giving up the search for an explanation. ... In fact this would be equivalent to admitting effects without a

cause." Barr agrees with this, too. But he goes on to say, "But to employ arguments in science based on statistical randomness and probability is not necessarily to 'oppose' the idea of chance to the existence of God the Creator."

The confusion arises when scientists and non-scientists alike speak of "random" or "chance" mutation. In the minds of many of them this *does* equal "uncaused" and therefore "unplanned"—and therefore opposed to the existence of God the Creator. Barr rightly maintains that this is not science. And so does Cardinal Schönborn, which is why he calls it "ideology, not science." But many scientists do make this equation. And many say so publicly, some quite stridently—Richard Dawkins and James Watson being notable examples. It is to these that Cardinal Schönborn's criticism is directed. And it is not an intrusion of theology or philosophy into science; it is a higher order of knowledge showing where science has gone beyond the limits of its own method. One cannot deny the principle of causality, upon which meta-scientific assumption all science depends, without undermining all science and all knowledge.

If we cannot discern the existence of order in the universe, despite our limited ability to comprehend that order, we cannot discern the existence of a good Creator. Yet Barr risks overemphasizing disorder when he describes planning without correlation: "So God, though he planned His work with infinite care, may not have chosen to impose certain kinds of correlations on certain kinds of events." Our human perspective, especially in its scientific mode, may be quite limited in the correlations it can determine, but that does not mean that our human rea-

son cannot discern a greater order to the cosmos through its laws.

And here is the nub of another source of confusion: Modern science does not investigate finality or purpose. It limits itself to “natural” phenomena: material and immediate efficient causes. Therefore, from within its own (very successful) method, the scientist as scientist can neither conclude that there is not an Intelligent Designer, i.e. that physical processes are unguided or unplanned, or, for that matter, that there is one. But the scientist as a human being can affirm the latter. As Cardinal Schönborn puts it: “by the light of reason the human intellect can readily and clearly discern purpose and design in the natural world.”

I think Barr’s recourse to contingency also adds to the confusion. He can perhaps be excused since the document of the International Theological Commission he cites is itself confusing when it refers to “a purely contingent natural process.” When St. Thomas refers to “contingent causes,” he is speaking of causes that do not have their natural or necessary effect because they are impeded by other causes. His example is the seed that doesn’t germinate because the “germinating force” is impeded. Contingency is a red herring in this debate because, for St. Thomas, “contingent” is not equivalent to “statistically random” or “uncaused.”

The present controversy began with a cardinal. Cardinal Newman in his discourse “Christianity and Physical Science” said: The Physicist “contemplates facts before him; the Theologian gives the reasons of these facts. The Physicist treats of efficient causes; the Theologian of final. The Physicist tells us of laws. The Theologian of the Author, Maintainer, and Controller of them.” And, quoting Macaulay approvingly: “it is not easy to see that a philosopher of the present day is more favorably situated than Thales or Simonides. He has

before him just the same evidences of design in the structure of the universe which the early Greeks had.”

The Rev. Joseph Fessio, S.J.  
Naples, Florida

Stephen M. Barr’s article is thoughtful and penetrating, but his criticism of Intelligent Design misunderstands the crux of the theory. Barr rightly observes that the presence of randomness at one level of a process does not preclude the designedness of the process as a whole. (My example would be the screen saver that makes kaleidoscopic patterns on my desktop with a random number generator.) ID thinkers do not dispute this point. No ID thinker suggests that if there is any randomness in a process whatsoever, it cannot be designed. What some of them do suggest is that if any aspects of the outcome of the process cannot be reasonably explained by randomness *alone*, or physical law *alone*, or by a combination of randomness with physical law, then it is reasonable to infer that intelligent agency has also been at work. This is a different proposition than the one that Barr attacks, and it escapes his critique. Indeed, if an ID thinker is defined as anyone who considers design to be empirically detectable, then Barr himself is an ID thinker, for as he writes, “even within the neo-Darwinian framework, there are many ways that one could see evidence of . . . the directedness of the universe and life.” The only thing that needs to be cleared up is how his criteria for detecting design differ from those of the other proponents of ID.

J. Budziszewski  
University of Texas  
Austin, Texas

It was a pleasure to read Stephen Barr’s “Design of Evolution.” His previous articles have also been impressive, and in this case I especially liked his way of finding the “both/and” rather than insisting on

the “either/or.” The randomness and chance that evolution theory emphasizes are brought within the scope of scientific analysis, but at the same time the mechanics of evolution can be brought within the intent of a grand design. In fact, as has been pointed out, “natural selection” is a teleological expression!

The theory of evolution does not require it to be beyond the reach of an intelligent design (or else it would not be a theory), nor does the theory of design require it to be restricted to formal methods that exclude natural selection.

Brendan Kneale, FSC  
De La Salle Institute  
Napa, California

Cardinal Schönborn says, “evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense [is] an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection.” According to Stephen M. Barr, the cardinal “has slipped into a definition of a scientific theory,” something the cardinal, who is not a scientist, apparently should not be doing. But whether he is defining science or not, the cardinal is right. And he gives his statement an even sharper point by quoting the installation homily of Benedict XVI, “We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.” Perhaps what is going on, to the evident distress of Barr, is a process of correction. The Church is in the world and its members think the world’s thoughts, but when things go too far, the Church returns to its ancient truths, and restates them.

David Shale  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Separating philosophical extrapolation from scientific fact is a difficult task when it comes to the topic of evolution. Stephen Barr’s insightful critique of Cardinal Schönborn’s let-

ter on the subject goes a long way toward this end, but while I commend him for his effort I do though think that he was a bit harsh on the cardinal.

Barr takes the cardinal to task for “slipping into the definition of a *scientific* theory, neo-Darwinism, the words ‘unplanned’ and ‘unguided,’ which are fraught with *theological* meaning.” The cardinal is not responsible for this misstep; these words have been slipped into neo-Darwinian theory by many influential evolutionary thinkers, and that was no doubt the impetus for the cardinal’s article.

Most popular neo-Darwinian writers have blurred the distinction between natural selection as a scientific theory of evolution and the separate philosophical position that evolution is unguided and therefore atheistic. Nearly all of the leading Darwinian authors—Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Douglas Futuyama, etc.—have explicitly stated that neo-Darwinian theory is incompatible with the Christian faith. As Futuyama has written, “Some shrink from the conclusion that the human species was not designed, has no purpose, and is the product of mere mechanical mechanisms—but this seems to be the message of evolution.” This is the version of neo-Darwinian evolution that the cardinal is trying to refute. Unfortunately, as Barr points out, the cardinal probably bit off more than he could digest in a short op-ed piece.

Barr, for his part, does an admirable job of untangling the scientific position of neo-Darwinism from the unsavory philosophical positions that have become part and parcel of the theory. In doing so, though, it is important to note who did the tangling in the first place: It wasn’t the cardinal.

Daniel Kuebler  
Franciscan University  
of Steubenville  
Steubenville, Ohio

### Stephen M. Barr replies:

I must confess to puzzlement at the first several paragraphs of Father Fessio’s letter. It certainly *sounds* like he disagrees with me about something, but I can’t quite make out what. For, after saying that I have added to the confusion on the subject of chance and evolution, he seems to second me on point after point: “Barr was right to focus,” “[Barr] rightly concludes,” “Barr agrees with this too,” and “Barr rightly maintains.” Still, there are some points where I disagree with *him* (reciprocating his “temerity”). He says, “It is only because the scientist is unable to discover or track the causes that he terms an event ‘random.’” That is simply not the case. As I explained in my article (and illustrated with two examples), there are circumstances in which the causes of the events are known or easily traced, but where nevertheless there is the kind of lack of correlation among events that I called “statistical randomness.” (In *this* sense of the term “random,” by the way, one should not apply it to single events, as Fessio does, but to ensembles or sets of events.)

I must also demur when Fessio says that Cardinal Schönborn’s article “is not an intrusion of theology or philosophy into science.” I am happy to learn that such an intrusion was not the cardinal’s intention. Consider, however, these words of the cardinal’s *New York Times* piece: “defenders of neo-Darwinian dogma have often invoked the supposed acceptance—or at least acquiescence—of the Roman Catholic Church when they defend their theory as somehow compatible with Christian faith. But this is not true.”

Well, if one is talking about what the Catholic Church accepts as compatible with faith, one is certainly talking about theology. It may be natural theology, but it is theology all the same. The only question, then, is whether “neo-Darwinism” is science.

For understandable reasons some people mistakenly imagine that neo-Darwinism is a philosophical system, or entails one. As the letters from Joseph Fessio and Daniel Kuebler rightly emphasize, the blame for this mainly lies with such scientists as Richard Dawkins and James Watson. I suspect, however, that it may also have a linguistic basis. Very few scientific theories, as opposed to philosophical schools, are called “isms” and named after their founders. One does not talk about Maxwellism, Heisenbergism, or Einsteinism. The prefix “neo” also is more common in philosophy. Nevertheless, “neo-Darwinism” is a scientific term. It is univocal and its meaning is generally agreed upon. It refers to the synthesis of Darwin’s theory of natural selection with the science of genetics that took place in the 1920s and 1930s through the efforts of such men as Sewall Wright, J.B.S. Haldane, and R.A. Fisher. One may consult any number of dictionaries, old or recent, general or scientific, and one will find that each gives only this definition of the term. Consequently there can be no gainsaying the fact that in condemning “neo-Darwinism” one is condemning a scientific, not a philosophic, theory.

By contrast, the word “contingency” does have several meanings that can be distinguished. I bow to Fessio’s expertise and grant his exegetical point about St. Thomas’s usage. But the several meanings of the word contingency are obviously closely related, so I do not think that the International Theological Commission was at all confusing things. Nor do I agree that “contingency is a red herring in this debate.” Rather, it lies at the heart of the debate, as the commission astutely recognized.

Let us look at St. Thomas’s example of the “germinative force,” because it furnishes a wonderful illustration of how chance plays a role in biology. Why doesn’t this force unfailingly produce its natural

effect? Because many conditions must be satisfied, such as good soil, moisture, the right temperature, the absence of creatures who will eat and destroy the seeds, and perhaps the presence of other creatures who will eat and excrete and thereby both distribute and fertilize the seeds. And these conditions, in turn, depend on many other factors, such as the weather. In other words, there is a "vastly complex web of contingency" involved (to use a phrase from my article, in which "contingency" is used in an ordinary sense). And thereby does the germination of the seed become subject to the vagaries of "chance." Indeed, it is part of the "reproductive strategy" of many species of plants to produce a great quantity of seeds to compensate for the small probability that any one of them will succeed in being fertilized and germinating.

Fessio insists quite properly that we can discern order in the universe and that it points to God. As I have written a book recently that devoted many pages to making just that argument, I do not think I "risk overemphasizing disorder." On November 9, Pope Benedict gave an address in which, quoting St. Basil, he warned about those who think the world is "left to the mercy of chance" and is without "direction and order." If this is what Fessio is worried about too, I assure him that I am on his side and that of St. Basil and the pope. The whole point of my article was precisely to demonstrate that the narrow concept of randomness that is used throughout all branches of science is compatible with a divine Providence that governs and directs every event in the universe.

As Fessio notes, "The present controversy began with a cardinal." Sadly, there is another, much older precedent, that involved a cardinal and science. Cardinal Bellarmine was a great saint and a brilliant theologian, but he helped unintentionally to prepare the way for a fateful colli-

sion. In the present case, I am firmly convinced that such a collision will not take place, the distressing forecast in David Shale's letter notwithstanding.

I thank J. Budziszewski for his very kind words. In referring to my "criticism of the ID movement," however, he mistakes me. There is nothing in my article that expressed or implied any criticism of the ID movement. On the contrary, I mentioned that movement only to praise its leading lights for recognizing that "statistical randomness, chance, and probability can be part of legitimate explanation of phenomena" and for rightly insisting that the issues they raise are to be settled scientifically. I agree with everything Budziszewski says in their defense. (This isn't to say I don't have criticisms of the ID movement, only that I did not express them in my article.) If being an "ID thinker" meant only what Budziszewski defines it here to mean, I would indeed count myself as one.

### Debating Darfur

I have no doubt that Allen Hertzke's essay ("The Shame of Darfur," October)—written in part at my expense—will earn him kudos from the likes of Nicholas Kristof and Ben & Jerry. That alone should worry him.

Hertzke's description of my views on the issue is uncharacteristically and indefensibly inaccurate. I am not soft on the government of Sudan, and only the grossest exaggeration could imply that I am its appeaser. Moreover, and contrary to what Hertzke asserts, I do not believe that the United States lacks the leverage to bring about a satisfactory peace agreement in Darfur. Quite the opposite, I believe that pressuring the Darfur rebels and rejecting the anti-Bush, anti-Christian Right campaign now being conducted in the guise of saving Darfur could bring about a satis-

factory peace agreement in a matter of months.

I received criticisms similar to Hertzke's when I helped pass a Sudan Peace Act without any capital-market sanction provisions in it. (It did not seem to matter to critics that Congress never would have passed legislation with such provisions.) Even more intense criticism came when I helped pressure John Garang by making it clear that his SPLA forces would forfeit U.S. support for their cause—support I had helped build—unless they began seriously to negotiate with the government of Sudan. Both acts were among the best and most effective things I have ever done.

Calling names has its virtues, but it can't be an end in itself. Naked condemnation should be accompanied by appeals to the prudence of your target and to the better influences within its camp. When one doubts one's capacity to overthrow a regime or replace it with a better one, condemnation is useful only as a means of creating leverage for carefully thought-out and well-defined changes and reforms.

I believe that, however unintentionally, Hertzke is adopting the priorities of an establishment that was largely silent for more than twenty years about the North-South war in Sudan, in which millions were killed at the hands of the government. (In that war Christians were killed at the hands of Muslims, which made it a "complicated" situation to many of the same elites who find Darfur easy grounds for anti-Bush outrage.) Hertzke follows the lead of Darfur activists like the *New York Times'* Nicholas Kristof, who condemn with Old Testament fury those who don't want to do "more" in Darfur even as they favor appeasing with subsidies and legitimacy a North Korean regime that starves and murders millions.

The worst of the killings may be over in Darfur, but its people still suf-

fer grievously. How can we end this? The Ben & Jerry approach—Ben (or was it Jerry?) got arrested at the Sudanese embassy to the applause of anti-Bush activists—has many harmful effects. First, shrill protests aren't likely to be productive, because the Sudanese government, with support from Europe and China, will resist pressure to give the Darfur rebels what they really seek, which is the right to form a separate government. Further, such a balkanizing deal would ensure a similar war in eastern Sudan.

Further still, U.S. rejection of a separate Darfur state was a critical basis on which Khartoum accepted the North-South agreement. Finally, and critically, the Ben & Jerry approach ignores the fact that the government of Sudan and its leaders can be made to do the right thing—a matter clearly demonstrated by their forced and grudging acceptance of the North-South peace agreement and, for the most part, their present-day compliance with its terms.

There's more: Hertzke ignores the progress towards a Darfur agreement that can be brought about by putting pressure on the former southern Sudanese rebels now serving as senior officials in the government of Sudan. For example, progress towards peace in Darfur can come from making much-needed U.S. aid increasingly contingent on the efforts of former SPLA leaders to urge the Darfur rebels to engage in serious bargaining. Such a linkage would be controversial, but would yield far more than Hertzke's condemnations.

Also, in focusing exclusively on the government of Sudan, Hertzke ignores what even the *New York Times* has recently reported: that the worst and most savage marauding terrorists in Darfur—the Janjaweed militias—may no longer be under the government's control. Thus Hertzke may be calling for policies that have all the force and value of pushing on a string.

Finally, Hertzke ignores the record of Darfur rebel groups like the SLM, which now seems engaged in war within its own ranks as often as it is with the government of Sudan. SLM Chairman Abdul Nur recently charged that Darfur rebel groups are "looters . . . who want to perpetuate chaos in the region." The target of his accusation was SLM Secretary General Mani Minawi.

How do Hertzke's moralisms square with the facts? And what does Hertzke actually want to be done? Does he want more access to refugee camps by relief workers? In a serious negotiation, that is possible. Does he want more African Union troops protecting enclaves for refugees and other targets of the Janjaweed? With effort and serious negotiating, that is also achievable, even though some Darfur rebel groups have recently taken to attacking and kidnapping African Union soldiers. No-fly zones? Assuming they aren't already in force (reports are conflicting), those are clearly possible. So why create profound disincentives to such outcomes by signaling to the government of Sudan that it will be condemned no matter what it does in Darfur, and no matter how little the rebels wish to negotiate a meaningful peace agreement?

And why isn't Hertzke more forthcoming about whether he supports the formation of a separate government for Darfur, which is the objective of many of the rebels? Or about whether and to what extent rebel groups have been violating ceasefire agreements? If, as Hertzke urges, responsibility for all that goes wrong in Darfur is pinned on the government alone, fighting in Darfur and the unspeakable suffering that goes with it will continue, because a war that in which Khartoum can be blamed for every evil will only strengthen the separatist agenda of many rebel leaders. (The same is true if Hertzke desires war-crimes trials for officials of the government of

Sudan; he needs to be up-front about the costs of this objective in the form of continued war and violence in Darfur.) On the other hand, if Hertzke doesn't share the aims of the Darfur rebels and wants a peace agreement more than he wants retribution against the Sudanese government, why doesn't he say so publicly? Then he would see what can be gained from the government in the form of peace concessions.

Allen Hertzke remains my friend, but he must take a long step back from his shameful dismissal of Christian-led human rights initiatives towards North Korea and the against the trafficking of women. On what grounds does Hertzke compare the relative merits of engagement in Darfur to campaigns focused on human rights abuses or the worldwide scourge of sex trafficking? Numbers killed? A lower potential for success? Fewer ripple-effect benefits for other persecuted people around the world? In this business, you are utopian (that is, self-indulgent and immoral) if you haven't given tough thought to choosing between priorities.

Hertzke also needs to step back immediately from libels against Christians that have become a core element of the Ben & Jerry story of Darfur—the claim that evangelicals (and George Bush) cared about southern Sudan's Christians but are indifferent to the suffering of Darfur's Muslims. In fact, Hertzke's charge of Christian indifference occurs in the very same article in which he acknowledges that Christian groups have actively prayed over, protested, and condemned the government of Sudan for its actions in Darfur. How many more prayer vigils will it take to get Hertzke to let up on the Evangelical activists he condemns for not doing "more"?

In the end, Hertzke's essay will only increase the pressure on Christian human rights activists, the Bush administration, and others to take the course of least political resistance and

follow the Ben & Jerry party line, condemning the government of Sudan with escalating dudgeon. But taking out more full-page newspaper ads, calling for war-crimes trials, and holding more protest meetings that ignore the conduct of the Darfur rebels will not bring about peace in Darfur. It will have the opposite effect, encouraging the rebels to do what any shrewd advisor would tell them to do in the current environment: keep the pot boiling.

What Hertzke advocates will lead to more of what human rights movements do *not* need: appeals to broad goals devoid of specific, achievable objectives. Such moralizing will have deadly consequences, because it increases the likelihood that the Darfur refugee camps in Chad will fester and create perverse incentives that abet intractability and irresponsibility (and far worse), just as the Palestinian refugee camps have. It will be deadly, too, because it makes it harder to bolster opposition to North Korea's Nazi-like practices or rescue millions of girls from the hands of predatory pimps—winnable causes that could generate additional reform throughout the world.

I've opposed promiscuous moralism in everything I've done, including my role in the North-South Sudan peace agreement, which angered activists—many of them friends—who knew more about how to condemn than how to negotiate the peace agreement that has meant so much to the people of southern Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. One-sided moralism is especially wrong in the case of Darfur because a satisfactory peace agreement is there to be had if pressure is applied to *both* the government of Sudan and the Darfur rebels.

It is tragic that Allen Hertzke chose to tar those who seek to apply such pressure. Unrecanted, Allen's piece will help surrender the field to shrill voices of condemnation and partisan manipulators and reduce

maneuvering room for those with more promising approaches to ending the tragedy of Darfur.

Michael Horowitz  
Hudson Institute  
Washington, D.C.

Allen Hertzke makes two points with which I wholeheartedly agree. The first is that the ethnic cleansing in Darfur commands the attention and action of American Christians. (A central tenet of Christian morality is that injustice is not only perpetuated by the actions of unjust men but also by the inaction of just men.) The second is Hertzke's indictment of the American religious community for its "fragmented" response to the atrocities in Darfur, especially when compared to the courage and intensity with which many American Christian groups tackled the protracted North-South war in Sudan. This apparent indifference is made more conspicuous because it was Christians who were murdered in the North-South war, whereas the majority of the 400,000 slaughtered in Darfur were Muslim.

I disagree, however, when Hertzke contends that North-South peace became a priority for the Bush Administration because "the issue had politically mobilized a critical mass of the American Christian community." Since Christian conservatives comprise a crucial part of the president's political base, the author presumes that they can get Darfur on the administration's agenda. But it is not at all clear that the White House would make Darfur a priority, even if conservative Christian groups put more pressure on it to act. The administration seems willing to talk up the Christian conservative cause but rarely spends any political capital on it. Yes, the administration worked hard to ensure that a North-South peace agreement was realized, but that was during the run-up to an election for which Bush needed the support of the evangelical community.

Since his reelection, Bush has done very little to address any of the issues dear to religious conservatives. Access does not necessarily translate into policy results when a president is in his second term.

That said, while the president is, as the author acknowledges, in a difficult position where both action and inaction will invite criticism, the costs of inaction should be considered within the larger context of Bush's foreign policy. Failure to act in Darfur undermines the moral tenets, and thus the moral credibility, of current U.S. foreign policy, whose central principle is the defense of the natural rights of all mankind. Continued inaction in Darfur imperils every other foreign mission the United States undertakes.

Daniel Allott  
American Values  
Washington, D.C.

Allen Hertzke's thorough synopsis of the atrocities in Sudan helps us understand the problems at hand. His desire to elevate the issue and increase aid to Darfur is noble and deserves attention. We can and must increase involvement in Sudan, and specifically in Darfur. Hertzke misses the mark, however, when he overlooks the tremendous role Christian organizations continue to play in speaking out against the travesties in Darfur.

When Hertzke accuses the faith community of minimal involvement, he overlooks groups such as Samaritan's Purse or Persecution Project. The involvement of Samaritan's Purse in Sudan has *increased* recently as they extend their reach to embrace the whole of the country, especially Darfur. Similarly, Persecution Project is extensively involved in aiding Darfur refugees. Allegations that such groups discriminate against Darfur's Muslim population are utterly false.

As for Hertzke's critical assessment of the Bush administration, it

should be noted that the administration is the loudest voice in the world speaking out against what has been happening in Darfur. The United States has provided most of the humanitarian aid in Darfur, saving thousands from starvation. This administration has also called the Darfur situation “genocide”—the first time in history that term has been used to refer to an ongoing situation.

Hertzke also ignores another piece of the story: Groups like Move-On.org are ostracizing the NGOs already working on Darfur by redefining the problem as entirely “Bush’s fault.” As Tereza Dud, a southern Sudanese attending a “Day for Darfur” gathering, said in a recent article by Faith McDonnell, “Maybe this is just a rally for people who don’t like Bush.”

Having said this, however, I want to pay tribute to Hertzke: He has done a heroic job of pointing out human rights violations around the world, and in most cases I have applauded his strong support of the evangelical community. We owe him a great debt, and even as he continues to prod us—justly, and sometimes not as justly—he’s doing a great public service.

Charles W. Colson  
Prison Fellowship  
Washington, D.C.

#### Allen D. Hertzke replies:

My article on Darfur clearly elicited strong reactions. Let me express, at the outset, my appreciation for the letters and interest this article has sparked. Daniel Allott makes a good point that second-term presidents may not respond to constituent pressure with the same alacrity as during their re-election phase. But as Harriet Miers’ nomination to the Supreme Court shows, the administration does respond to a groundswell from its religious base, and if a unified religious community demanded more vigorous engagement on Darfur the

issue *would* vault higher on the president’s agenda.

Charles Colson does a service in highlighting the laudable and expanding work of Christian organizations in providing relief to Darfur refugees. Most major evangelical organizations take pains not to discriminate, especially in providing relief. And for only a few sectarian groups does it appear that their response to the crisis is affected by the fact that Darfurians are Muslims. But as I noted, a fragmented *political* response by the evangelical community to Darfur may lead *others* to the false allegation that born-again Christians only care about fellow believers. Unfortunately, as also mentioned in my article, this impression is already taking root in certain circles, and it threatens to tarnish the great triumph of the faith-based movement in bringing an end to the North-South conflict.

Colson emphasizes that the Bush administration has done more than any other government in response to the Darfur tragedy. True. Yet the administration continues to send mixed signals to the Sudanese government. Recently the State Department upgraded the status of Sudan on slavery and human trafficking (despite the many southern slaves still held in the north, and abductions and rapes in Darfur). Moreover, it allowed—even encouraged—Sudan to hire a high-priced lobbying firm to improve its image and downplay continued Janjaweed violence.

Colson does raise a real problem in the politics of Darfur, one in which groups with an anti-Bush axe to grind attempt to hijack the movement for their ends. While I alluded to this potential for disingenuousness, the point benefits from Colson’s greater emphasis. Still, is there any reason that Christian leaders cannot fashion their own coordinated and measured response to Darfur completely detached from the MoveOn.org types?

And then there is the letter from my friend Michael Horowitz, as formidable an adversary as anyone can have. I am an admirer of his herculean human rights efforts over the past decade, and any misrepresentation I may have made of his views on Darfur was unintended.

Horowitz makes a number of helpful recommendations that could easily be incorporated into a reinvigorated presidential engagement on Sudan. His most cogent point is that by not conceding the sins of the rebel groups I failed to acknowledge the need to bring pressure on *both* the Darfur rebels and the government of Sudan to end the crisis. I agree. Recent developments suggest the challenges of dealing with the fractious rebel groups, but there is no contradiction between demanding that President Bush make Darfur a much higher priority (as I do) and pursuing the dual pressure course Horowitz favors. So what prevents the president from doing so? Indeed, if the administration brought high-level pressure on all sides (the Darfur rebels, the National Islamic Front in Khartoum, and the SPLM leaders now a part of the Sudanese government), combined with massively increased aid and dramatically enhanced security measures, I would applaud, and maybe even Nicholas Kristof would, too.

Horowitz’s complaints provide an opportunity to clear up some things. First, I did not say that he is soft on the government of Sudan or its appeasers. I suggested that he *had arguments* about how complicated the issue is, complications that he elaborates on in his response. These include an ardent set of assertions: that unilateral condemnation of Sudan will foster intransigence of the rebels, that the threat of war-crimes tribunals undermines negotiations, and that Khartoum may not fully control the Janjaweed. A careful reading of my piece shows that I articulated these themes—though

not quite as vigorously as Horowitz himself—as reasons he parts company with some of his allies on previous campaigns. But dwelling alone on these still-debated points unfortunately can undermine the sense of urgency the crisis cries out for.

Horowitz also contends that condemnations of Sudan by Darfur activists somehow hem Bush in. If that were the case, what explains the administration's current rather benign posture toward Khartoum in spite of such condemnation? No one is seriously talking about allowing Darfur to split off from Sudan, and the president, in announcing a fresh diplomatic initiative, could clearly enunciate such reassurances to Khartoum even while he demands their cooperation in ending the crisis.

As to interfaith initiatives on North Korea and trafficking, they are profoundly laudable and deserve to be chronicled—a narrative I began in *Saving God's Children* and plan to continue. But human rights campaigns need not be zero-sum. Victories in one area often create momentum and cachet for another. Thus there is no reason to slight Darfur as too complicated. Indeed, the faith-based movement is accustomed to such contentions and currently confronts similar arguments—from the State Department and elsewhere—that North Korea is “too complicated” for human rights “interference.”

Horowitz himself spends more ink on the rebel groups' sins and errant agendas than Khartoum's. No doubt this is to counter what he sees in the Darfur campaign as simplistic condemnation of Sudan, along with anti-Bush and anti-Christian Right elements. But that seems a caricature of the breadth of the groups involved in the Darfur coalition, including some evangelical ones. A recent full-page ad in the *New York Times* sponsored by a host of Jewish groups avoided condemnation entirely and called for the kinds of measures I recommended: increasing humanitarian

aid, expanding the African Union force and mandate, and enhancing U.S. logistical support. Nowhere is there a call for war crimes tribunals and retribution, or condemnations of President Bush.

Reasonable minds can disagree on strategy. But condemning the government of Sudan for staggering atrocities in Darfur does not mean that one must therefore be trucking with an “establishment” that ignored the southern conflict, Bush-bashers, or those who favor appeasing the North Korean regime. More important, my considered appraisal of the evangelical lobby was not meant to libel born-again Christians as indifferent to Darfur. What I said is that the response has been fragmented thus far and that *some* voices active on the south are silent on Darfur. In conversations with staff for members of Congress, this is what I hear, that they are not getting the same kind of constituent pressure from the evangelical community on Darfur that they did on southern Sudan.

What matters in Washington is how high on the agenda an issue is. Religious mobilization can achieve heightened administration focus on Darfur without jeopardizing other human rights initiatives. Plus, there is no reason the evangelical elite, with its clout, cannot frame its *own* public posture, say by announcing expanded church aid appeals, lauding Bush for his leadership in the South, and *then* challenging him to elevate his personal stakes in ending the tragedy in Darfur.

Calling for the faith-based movement to make Darfur a higher priority does not imply the adoption of empty moralizing gestures that Horowitz rightly views as potentially counterproductive. I tried to avoid this by including specific recommendations made by well-grounded bipartisan entities. Other ideas—such as a special envoy with presidential access to engage all sides or a NATO bridging force to assist the

African Union—have since been advanced to deal with the obviously complex dimensions to the crisis. Ironically, without engaging Darfur more aggressively, church leaders might unintentionally allow the issue to be hijacked by the MoveOn.org types, which is precisely what Horowitz fears.

Ultimately the question comes down to this: Can the Bush administration do more to end the crisis in Darfur? The answer is: Yes, it can. And increased religious activism need not reduce the president's maneuvering room to mount smart initiatives on multiple fronts. To be sure, the whole region is fragile, complications abound, and success is not guaranteed, but “never again” will ring hauntingly if the highest levels of the U.S. government are not engaged in halting the slow-motion decimation of a people—and if the Ameri-

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can religious community does not do all it can to make that happen. This is a great moral issue, one that deserves our voices and strategic visions.

## Populating Europe

Thanks to Father Richard John Neuhaus for his poignant analysis in "The New Europes" (October). Poland is truly a light in the spiritual darkness of that continent. Notwithstanding Neuhaus' mostly sagacious and incisive remarks, I would particularly like to caution against some possible miscalculations that I detected. He states quite optimistically that "some studies suggest that the general population of western Europe is not as secular as many think." Well, maybe so, but that would seem to contradict prevailing European social attitudes, particularly regarding issues like abortion, gay marriage and adoption, prostitution, drugs, and public nudity. Poland is clearly exceptional in this respect, and I doubt anyone can foresee western European social policies or attitudes changing anytime soon.

Europe's demographic future is an intriguing topic for those of us interested in demographics. The risk, I think, is not as great as feared by Neuhaus and others. Populations ebb and increase throughout history. The baby dearth of the 1930s (when America had a stagnant economy with double-digit unemployment) was followed by the baby boom of the 1940s and 1950s. Likewise, the ancient Greek population recovered after the Mycenaean collapse during the Homeric age, and Europe's general population recovered from plague and war many times.

Even if no such demographic recovery occurs, should we be so alarmed at the Islamic ascendancy in Europe? While I dare not ignore or underestimate the threat of international terrorism, should people of faith not cautiously welcome the increase of the faithful in a nearly

faithless population? Let me make clear that I would like to see a reemergence of Christianity in Europe as much as anyone, but how likely is such a thing?

Kevin Ice  
Sacramento, California

## Much Ado About Nothing

Joseph Bottum on P.G. Wodehouse ("God and Bertie Wooster," October) reminded me that a few years ago I offered a course called "The Comic Muse." It started with Aristophanes and ended with Wodehouse's *Quick Service*. In between we met Petronius Arbiter, some Chaucer, Shakespeare, Jonson, Molière, Swift, Dickens, Trollope (*The Warden*), Waugh, and Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* among others. I suppose the students' doubts about the seriousness of the comic were tamed a bit by my insisting that solemn the texts were not; serious, they certainly were, despite a perceived disengagement in the points of view. I hope Thalia—the inspiring Olympian—was pleased.

What especially troubled me was the void so clear and howling beneath Wodehouse's excellent and very funny prose. Unfairly, I guess, the nothingness underneath his work kept intruding as I read and analyzed and talked. There is no way I could dismiss from my mind that grizzly Hemingway closure to his nihilist and creedal display in a "Clean, Well-lighted Place." You might remember the Our Father and the Hail Mary are reduced to a parodic nothing.

I still read Wodehouse and agree with almost everything Bottum said in his article, but was Wodehouse's talent, evident in so many novels and stories, wittingly or unwittingly producing a body of work potentially corrupting? I raise the question, and not in a mere rhetorical fashion.

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### U.S. Postal Service STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1. Title of publication: FIRST THINGS
  2. Publication No. 005476.
  3. Date of Filing: Sept. 30, 2005
  4. Frequency of issue: Monthly except combined issues June/July and August/September.
  5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 10.
  6. Annual Subscription Price: \$39.
  7. Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010-7002.
  8. Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of the Publisher: 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010-7002.
  9. Names and Complete Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor. Publisher: Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010-7002. Editor-in-Chief: Richard John Neuhaus. Editor: Joseph Bottum. Managing Editor: Erik Ross. Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010-7002.
  10. Owner: Institute on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010-7002.
  11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None.
  12. The Purpose, Function, and Nonprofit Status of this Organization and the Exempt Status for Federal Income Tax Purposes Has Not Changed During the Preceding 12 Months.
  13. Publication Title: FIRST THINGS
  14. Issue date for circulation data below:  
Average: November 2004 through October 2005  
Actual: October 2005
  15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:
- |                                                                    | Avg. No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months | Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Total No. copies (Net Press Run)                                | 35,169                                                | 37,008                                                   |
| B. Paid Circulation                                                |                                                       |                                                          |
| 1. Paid or Requested Outside county Mail Subscriptions             | 28,135                                                | 29,027                                                   |
| 2. Paid in-county Subscriptions                                    | —                                                     | —                                                        |
| 3. Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales | 3,209                                                 | 4,802                                                    |
| 4. Other Classes                                                   | —                                                     | —                                                        |
| C. Total Paid Circulation (Sum of 15B1 and 15B3)                   | 31,344                                                | 33,829                                                   |
| D. Free Distribution by Mail                                       | 325                                                   | 173                                                      |
| E. Free Distribution outside the Mail                              | —                                                     | —                                                        |
| F. Total Free Distribution                                         | 325                                                   | 173                                                      |
| G. Total Distribution                                              | 31,669                                                | 34,002                                                   |
| H. Copies Not Distributed                                          | 3,500                                                 | 3,006                                                    |
| I. Total (Sum of G and H)                                          | 35,169                                                | 37,008                                                   |
| J. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation                       | 98.97                                                 | 99.49                                                    |
16. Statement of Ownership will be printed in the November 2004 issue of this Publication.
  - I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
- RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS  
Editor-in-Chief

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# OPINION

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## The Prudence of Abraham Lincoln

Allen C. Guelzo

Say the word *prudence* to the ancients, and you would have named a virtue. Say it to the faculties of American colleges in the nineteenth century, and you would have described part of the philosophy curriculum. Say it today, and you've made a joke. Through much of American history, prudence was considered a desirable trait in public leaders—and the decay we have experienced in the word makes it difficult to understand the prime American example of prudence in political life: Abraham Lincoln.

Much as Lincoln was a grass-roots, up-from-the-ranks politician, he was perfectly at ease in speaking the role of virtue in political life. Lincoln insisted that he “regarded prudence in all respect as one of the cardinal virtues,” and he hoped, as president, that “it will appear that we have practiced prudence” in the management of public affairs. Even in the midst of the Civil War, he promised that the war would be carried forward “consistently with the prudence . . . which ought always to regulate the public service,” and without allowing it to degenerate “into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle.” Lincoln had little notion that, over the course of a hundred and fifty years, this commitment to prudence would become a source of condemnation rather than approval.

Prudence carries with it today the connotation of “prude”—a person of over-exaggerated caution, bland temperance, hesitation, a lack of imagination and will, a person who walks with mincing steps. This would have surprised the classical philosophers, who thought of prudence as one of the four cardinal virtues, and who linked it to shrewdness, exceptionally good judgment, and the gift of *coup d'oeil*—the “coup of the eye”—which could take in the whole of a situation at once and know almost automatically how to proceed. Aristotle called it “practical wisdom” in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and contrasted it with “intuitive reason,” the natural endowment Aristotle thought some people had for understanding what was ultimately right and what was ultimately wrong. Intuitive reason marked out “the

ultimates in both directions,” while prudence “makes us take the right means.”

It was Romanticism that led us from classical prudence to the shrinking violet that prudence seems to be today. “We do not need science and philosophy to know what we should do to be honest and good, yea, even wise and virtuous,” argued Kant in his *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*. What we need to do is yield to an instinctive ethical absolutism which we discover, not through reason, but through action. “There is an imperative which commands a certain conduct immediately, without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it, . . . let the consequences be what it may.” Prudence thus became, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “the virtue of the senses; it is the science of appearances . . . which adores the Rule of Three, which never subscribes, which never gives, which seldom lends, and asks but one question of any project, — Will it bake bread?”

But what gave the assault on prudence its moving power was the intersection of Romanticism with America's home-grown version of ethical absolutism, in the evangelical Great Awakening. “There can be nothing to render it, in any measure, a *hard* and *difficult* thing, to love God with all our hearts,” wrote Joseph Bellamy, the pupil of Jonathan Edwards, in 1750, “but our being destitute of a *right* temper of mind . . . therefore, we are *perfectly inexcusable*, and altogether and *wholly to blame*, that we do not.”

These two streams of absolutism met in the great opponents of slavery, the abolitionists, who combined Romantic ethics with evangelicalism in a fiery blend of Kantian idealism and John the Baptist—and it is exactly this abolitionist blending that alienated Abraham Lincoln from their ranks. Lincoln is not our great Romantic leader or our great evangelical. He is, instead, our great *anti*-absolutist, a man of prudence.

Born at the end of the so-called “long Enlightenment,” Lincoln had no reservations about being guided by “Reason” or preferring it to passion. In a speech from 1838, Lincoln warned that the pillars of the republic must fall “unless we, their descendants, supply their places with other pillars, hewn from the solid quarry of sober reason. Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense.” Twenty-one years later, as he took the presidential oath, Lincoln was still warning that “Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.”

The most obvious example of Lincoln's prudence at work is his handling of slavery and emancipation. It has become common—and was common in Lincoln's own day among the abolitionists—to denounce Lincoln as

“an equivocating, vacillating leader,” to borrow the words of W.E.B. DuBois. Lincoln’s chief aim was “the integrity of the Union and not the emancipation of the slaves; that if he could keep the Union from being disrupted, he would not only allow slavery to exist but would loyally protect it.” But consider what Lincoln’s options for emancipation really were. In an era before the Fourteenth Amendment, civil rights (including the definition of citizenship) were state prerogatives, protected from federal review.

Much as he “was himself opposed to slavery,” Lincoln could not “see how the abolitionists could reach it in the slave states.” Demands for immediate abolition might satisfy some Romantic yearning for justice over law, but as long as slavery was a state institution, any attempt to emancipate slaves by executive order would be at once challenged by the states in the federal courts—and the federal judiciary, all the way up to the Supreme Court, had shown itself repeatedly and profoundly hostile to the idea. Abolitionists, Lincoln complained, “seemed to think that the moment I was president, I had the power to abolish slavery, forgetting that before I could have any power whatsoever I had to take the oath to support the Constitution of the United States as I found them.”

**O**n the other hand, immediate abolition was not the only avenue to emancipation. The federal government might have no direct power to interfere in state matters, but it did have considerable fiscal powers with which it could tempt slave states to abandon slavery by legislative action and embrace a federally funded buy-out. And within six months of his inauguration, Lincoln had initiated a campaign for legislative emancipation, beginning with Delaware, the weakest of the four slave states that remained loyal to the Union. This legislative option was based “upon these conditions: First, that the abolition should be gradual. Second, that it should be on a vote of the majority of the qualified voters of the District; and third that compensation should be made to unwilling owners.” Handled this way, emancipation would set up what he expected would be a domino-effect among the slave states for emancipation.

Unhappily for Lincoln, the loyal slave states threw his offer back in his face. So, in the summer of 1862, he turned instead to a military order that freed the Confederacy’s slaves—what we now know as the Emancipation Proclamation. But because the proclamation was only a military order, prudence dictated that he limit its application to those slave states in actual rebellion against the Union. And since little (if any) legal precedent existed for the use of presidential “war powers” in this way, he continued to back a legislative strategy, parallel to his war-powers proclamation, and in the end, it

was that legislative strategy that produced black freedom in the Thirteenth Amendment. Between these two strategies, legislative and military, Lincoln saw no conflict. He told federal judge Thomas Duval that “he saw nothing inconsistent with the gradual emancipation of slavery and his proclamation.” Lincoln’s procedure was at every step a model of prudence.

No characteristic of Lincoln’s prudence on emancipation, however, was more remarkable than his invocation of providence. As he explained to the cabinet on September 22, 1862, his decision to issue an emancipation proclamation was the direct consequence of “a vow, a covenant” he had made, “that if God gave us the victory” in the battle that resulted at Antietam on September 17, “he would consider it an indication of divine will and that it was his duty to move forward in the cause of emancipation. It might be thought strange that he had in this way submitted the disposal of matters when the way was not clear to his mind what he should do. God had decided this question in favor of the slaves. He was satisfied it was right, was confirmed and strengthened in his action by the vow and the results.”

This, coming from a man with as minimal a religious profile as Lincoln’s, was so surprising that Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase asked Lincoln to repeat himself, and Lincoln, “in a manner half-apologetic,” conceded that “this might seem strange.”

But providence had always played a major role in the constitution of Lincoln’s prudence, even if evangelical absolutism had not. He told the journalist Noah Brooks that he thought it “wise to wait for the developments of Providence; and the Scriptural phrase that ‘the stars in their courses fought against Sisera’ to him had a depth of meaning.” John Todd Stuart, who had been Lincoln’s mentor in Illinois law and who served in Congress, pressed Lincoln with the assertion: “I believe that Providence is carrying on this thing.” Lincoln replied “with great emphasis”: “Stuart, that is just my opinion.” And “considering our manner of approaching the subject” and “the emphasis and evident sincerity of his answer,” Stuart was “sure he had no possible motive for saying what he did unless it came from a deep and settled conviction.”

That conviction, instead of endowing Lincoln with evangelical hubris, forced him into an admission that he knew entirely too little about the ways of providence. “I believe we are all agents and instruments of Divine providence,” he told Senate chaplain Byron Sunderland, not merely in the egotistic sense that God had invested a special interest in the Union cause, but in the sense that North and South alike “we are working out the will of God.” Moreover, the government of providence was universal, in both time and space. The Civil War was a “struggle . . . for a vast future” that required “a reliance on Providence, all the more firm and

earnest" so that Americans may "proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us."

Providence was, for Lincoln, a means for balancing respect for a divine purpose in human affairs with the candid recognition that it was surpassingly difficult to know what purposes God might have. It was also a means he inherited from his long years as a Whig for recognizing the secular structure of the American federal government without surrendering entirely to the notion that it was *totally* secular—"that shallow doctrine of the Monticello School," as a Whig journal put it in 1846—or that the power of religious belief in society had to go untapped by civil government in its avoidance of seeming to establish a civic religion. By attaching the Emancipation Proclamation to his vow to God, Lincoln demonstrated what James C. Welling, the editor of Washington's flagship newspaper during the Civil War, called "that prudent and reverent waiting on Providence," which allowed Lincoln to fend off "the danger of identifying the proclamation in the popular mind with a panic cry of despair."

Lincoln understood emancipation, not as the satisfaction of a "spirit" overriding the law, nor as the moment of fusion between the Constitution and absolute moral theory, but as a goal to be achieved through prudential means, so that worthwhile consequences might result. He could not be persuaded that emancipation required the headlong abandonment of everything save the single absolute of abolition, or that purity of intention was all that mattered, or that the exercise of the will rather than the reason was the best ethical foot forward.

For Lincoln, the integrity of *intention* (in the form of the Constitution and the rule of law) and the integrity of *consequences* (the abolition of slavery) were complimentary rather than conflicting actors—the one possessed moral claims fully as much as the other. "To those who claim omnipotence for the Legislature, and who in the plenitude of their assumed powers, are disposed to disregard the Constitution, law, good faith, moral right, and every thing else," Lincoln declared in an early speech to the Illinois legislature, "I have nothing to say."

In this, Lincoln struggled to be true to the two souls of American culture. The one soul is the spirit of the Puritans: self-denying, evangelical, radical, and providential to the point of confidently identifying precisely who and what represent the operations of providence. The other is the spirit of the Enlightenment: secular, commercial, self-interested, enlightened.

These two have often been locked in combat, only to withdraw after a brief battering reminds them that in America they have no choice but to co-exist. Providence and prudence together are thus joined at the head, if not the heart, of American politics. In Lincoln, we

have a glimpse of prudence in a liberal democracy; but it is also our best glimpse of it, and perhaps our best hope for understanding and recovering it.

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## God and Man at Davidson

*Terry Eastland*

The Presbyterians founded Davidson College in North Carolina in 1837—in order, they said, to educate young men "of hopeful talents and piety, preparatory to the Gospel ministry . . . in humble reliance upon the blessing of God." Davidson has changed since then, expanding the curriculum and opening its doors to women. It is now widely regarded as one of the best liberal arts colleges in the country, and certainly it is one of the hardest to get into.

Throughout its history, college officials have prized Davidson's churchly ties, and indeed a visitor need not wander the campus long before coming upon the state-ly Davidson College Presbyterian Church—a name that could not more tightly conjoin college and church. DCPC is a member congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Some students attend the church, as does the college's president, Robert Vagt.

Two years ago Vagt asked the board of trustees to consider what the college's church-relatedness should mean today. Last February the board responded by taking a series of actions: revising the college's mission statement so the school's ties are not with the "Presbyterian Church" as such but with the "Reformed Tradition"; amending its by-laws to permit, for the first time, non-Christian trustees; and approving the creation of an endowed chair in Reformed Theology.

This story about Davidson College went unreported in the national press and would not have drawn my attention but for the fact that my daughter is a student at the college, and so I learned about the board's labors from the student newspaper, *The Davidsonian*. The decisions quickly proved controversial. Few trustees had voted against the measures, but one who did, John Belk, class of 1943 and the college's largest individual donor, felt so strongly that only Christians should govern the college that he resigned from the board. Many older alumni sided with Belk on the governance issue, while younger alumni, as well as most faculty members

and students, supported the decision. Meanwhile, religion professors weren't thrilled with the new position to be located within their department: We weren't consulted, they said, and anyway Reformed Theology is already being taught.

Over the months things have settled, and it is evident that the board's decisions will stick. Still, the Davidson story is worth a closer look, even for those with no attachments to the college. Davidson happens to be one of many older private colleges that started as Protestant endowments and eventually changed their character in a series of steps that came to seem inevitable. For these colleges, the steps taken were often presented in religious terms. The Davidson example stands out in that way, as the recent decisions demonstrate. The board, made up entirely of professing Christians, did not describe the decisions merely as practical ones compelled by earlier precedents. Instead, the board said the decisions were grounded in Christian faith. That, of course, is a basis for action not available to the next board, assuming it includes non-Christians.

The Davidson story begins early in 2004 with the board's retreat, where it explored "what it means to be a church-related college in the Reformed Tradition." The trustees unanimously concluded that "Christian faith and the Reformed Tradition" have been and should continue to be "positive influences" at Davidson. But the trustees felt those subjects weren't properly treated in the college's Statement of Purpose (first adopted in 1964), to which trustees, administrators, and faculty must give their support. Nor were many trustees satisfied with the by-laws requirement that all trustees must be "active members of a Christian Church." The trustees concluded their retreat by appointing an Ad Hoc Committee to review the "issues raised" and to draft recommendations. The committee duly labored, and the full board accepted its proposals after making mostly minor revisions.

The new Statement of Purpose differs from the old mainly in terms of the college's religious relations. Where the old statement said that "the ties which bind the college to the Presbyterian Church have remained close and strong" and that "the college intends that this vital relationship be continued to the mutual benefit of church and school," the new statement contains neither reference to the church and recasts the ties that bind as ones between the college and "its Presbyterian heritage, including the historic understanding of Christian faith called the Reformed Tradition." It also affirms the college's commitment to continuing "that vital relationship, though nothing is said about its being of "mutual benefit" to church and school.

Nor must trustees vow fidelity—as they did under the old by-laws—in "seeking to increase [Davidson's] effectiveness as an institution of Christian learning."

The new by-laws instead require trustees to "be faithful in . . . seeking to honor the traditions that have shaped Davidson as a place where faith and reason work together in mutual respect for service to God and humanity," the description of the college as "an institution of Christian learning" now deleted. Since honoring a religious tradition is not necessarily the same as believing its teachings, a non-Christian can serve with clear conscience as a trustee.

The new by-laws establish that prospect. They provide that out of "openness to and respect for the world's various religious traditions and the variety of religious preferences among the graduates and friends of Davidson," persons "who are not active members of a Christian church" but are otherwise qualified may be recommended for the office of trustee. They also provide that, "as part of continuing the historic commitment of Davidson to the Reformed Tradition of the Christian faith," at least 80 percent of all elected Trustees must be "active members of a Christian church." Thus, up to 20 percent of the 44 elected trustees—why this quota was chosen was not explained—need not satisfy the church requirement. They may be "non-active" church members, or active or inactive members of other religious entities. Or they may be of no religious faith at all.

These changes noted make Davidson less Presbyterian in its churchly relation and less Christian in its institutional identity and governance. This development is worth placing in historical context. In his 1998 book, *The Dying of the Light*, James Tunstead Burtchaell chronicled (as his subtitle declared) "The Disengagement of America's Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches." In his chapter on Davidson, Burtchaell relates how the college was initiated by the Concord Presbytery in North Carolina, which had complete authority over the school and required that trustees and faculty be in "full communion" with the Presbyterian Church. Burtchaell shows how this "Presbyterian enterprise" changed, with much of the story a recent one. In 1964 all faculty members had to attend "a Christian Church" and thus not necessarily a Presbyterian one. Within a decade all professors save those in the religion department were freed of even that, and in 1996 the board said the religion professors didn't have to go to a Christian church either. The board experienced a similar though less complete passage, as by the early 1970s a trustee had only to be "an active member of a Christian Church." A proposal to modify that requirement was before the board in 1996, falling several votes short of the two-thirds necessary. This time around, the votes were there.

Trustees and their supporters don't see the board's decisions as rendering the college in any way less Pres-

byterian or less Christian. Indeed, for them it is just the opposite. Consider that the cover letter to alumni transmitting what then were the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations said that "the primary outcome" of the process begun with the board's retreat was "the renewed and unanimous support of Davidson's faith heritage and its connection with the Presbyterian Church." Or consider the statement by two former presidents of the college, who said that the board's decisions reaffirmed and strengthened "the venerable ties between this institution and the Christian faith."

Now it is true that the decisions explicitly bind the college to the Reformed Tradition, a new development. And there will now be the chair in Reformed Theology—created because such theology is, according to the board, "a component of [Davidson's] educational mission." Given the "Reformed" emphasis in the board's decisions, you can see how a partisan of those decisions might think the college has become more "Reformed" and thus could not possibly be "less Presbyterian" or "less Christian."

Indeed, the trustees made clear their belief that the Reformed tradition actually provides the basis for their decisions. Writing in the *Charlotte Observer*, Spach declared that the Reformed tradition "in which we stand" is not one that "fears, excludes or belittles those who are different" but is "ecumenical in spirit," the point being that ecumenism—a truth now more fully understood, apparently—compelled opening board membership to non-Christians. Spach envisioned the "pursuit of truth" by an ecumenical board: "We [Christians] tell others what we believe and also humbly . . . listen to [the] beliefs" of "people of other faiths"—and "perhaps" learn "from each other." For Spach, an ecumenical board will be better able to pursue truth than an entirely Christian board.

Is it worth mentioning that the original Reformers—Luther and Calvin and those in their train—had a somewhat different idea of the Reformed tradition? The Davidson reformers have no church as the object of their reform. Their standard for reform invokes theological language but encompasses nothing biblically distinctive. Indeed, the reformers' ecumenism will be recognized as diversity or pluralism elsewhere in higher education, since the essential meaning is the same.

Soon the college will have an opportunity to offer a considered view of Reformed Theology. Must the new chair holder be active in a Reformed congregation, or might any Christian denomination do? Or might the person not be an atheist or agnostic? And with regard to Reformed Theology, what, substantively, will the new professor be expected to teach? Is Reformed Theology the most consistent statement of Christian faith there is, as some of its finest advocates have held? Most important, is it true in any exclusive sense? Does it draw any

boundaries? Or is it so open to other beliefs that it is empty at the core?

Not incidentally, the Presbyterian Church (USA) faces similar questions. Shortly before his death, the distinguished Presbyterian theologian John Haddon Leith of Union Theological Seminary expressed concern over his church's "inability to give a clear New Testament answer to the question Jesus put to his disciples, 'But who do you say that I am?'" In *Crisis in the Church*, Leith cited "the continual pressure in a pluralistic society" to answer that question by saying that "even if he is the word of God made flesh, he is only one of many words." Leith told his fellow Presbyterians that "in the doctrinal standards of the [church] no pluralism or diversity exists as to the faith by which the church lives and that distinguishes it from the secular culture." It is a more serious matter for a church than for a college to fail to answer this question correctly. Yet it cannot be a mere trifle how a college that believes it has reaffirmed and strengthened its ties to the Christian faith responds.

Davidson has been under the pressure of pluralism for so long that it may be unable to draw any boundaries. In his book, Burtchaell recalls that in its 1964 Statement of Purpose Davidson understood itself as "a worshipping as well as studying community," for only such a community could "nurture the whole man" and be "genuinely Christian." Three years later the college ended all corporate worship. Today the college has eliminated most of the provisions designed to maintain that original, worshipping community, one of the last still on the books being the now parodic requirement that the college's president be an active member of the campus church. The college hosts a community that studies, to be sure, but also aims, as a former Davidson president has put it, to embrace all people and support "their spirituality." That, he says, is what it means to be "a profoundly Christian institution."

It is elementary that colleges exist to educate students, and Davidson students committed to "the historic understanding of Christian faith called the Reformed Tradition" will fairly wonder whether the college is any place to look for instruction in Christian theology or, for that matter, Christian ethics. Not that the college fails to do many things well. It is in the highest rank academically, with many outstanding teachers. But students who confess the historic faith cannot be faulted for looking elsewhere for guidance on such fundamental matters. Indeed, the deepest lesson of the Davidson story is that the Church of Jesus Christ is not to be confused with a church-related college, that a church-related college can go its own way. The Davidson trustees did not intend to teach that, but it is the accurate lesson of the college's last all-Christian board.

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# Europe and Its Discontents

*Benedict XVI*

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What is the true definition of Europe? Where does it begin, and where does it end? Why, for example, is Siberia not considered part of Europe, even though many Europeans live there, and it has a European style of thinking and living? To the south of the community of Russian peoples, where do the borders of Europe disappear? Which Atlantic islands are European and which are not? Europe is a geographic term only in a secondary sense: Europe is rather a cultural and historical concept.

Experts on the origins of Europe traditionally refer back to Herodotus (c. 484-425 B.C.), the first known writer to designate Europe as a geographic concept: "The Persians consider something of their property to be Asia and the barbarian peoples who live there, while they maintain that Europe and the Greek world are a separate country."

Though the lands at the heart of today's Europe were completely outside of the visual field of the ancient historian, the formation of the Hellenistic states and the Roman Empire led to the establishment of a "continent" that would be the basis for the later Europe. As a whole, the lands facing the Mediterranean came to form a true continent by virtue of their cultural ties, trade routes, and common political system. It was not until the advance of Islam in the seventh and early eighth centuries that a border would be drawn across the Mediterranean, subdividing what had been a single continent into three: Asia, Africa, and Europe.

In the East the ancient world was transformed more slowly than in the West. Shifting its capital to Constantinople, the Roman Empire would resist in the East until the fifteenth century, although it was pushed further and further to the margins. During the same

period, the southern Mediterranean region found itself cut off completely from what had been a cultural continent for centuries, while Europe grew steadily northward. The ancient continental border that the Romans called *limes* disappeared. A new historical space opened up whose heartland encompassed Gaul, Germany, and Britannia, and whose northern reach expanded more and more toward Scandinavia.

Amid this process of shifting borders, a theology of history was constructed that guaranteed ideal continuity with the earlier Mediterranean continent in its various configurations. According to this thinking, rooted in the Book of Daniel, the Roman Empire had been renewed and transformed by the Christian faith, which therefore became the last reign in the history of the world. The framework of peoples and states that emerged defined itself as the permanent *Sacrum Imperium Romanum*, the Holy Roman Empire.

The process of forming a new historical and cultural identity took place in a fully conscious manner under the reign of Charlemagne, when the ancient name of Europe returned to circulation with a new meaning. It was now used to define the kingdom of Charlemagne and to express an awareness of both the continuity and the novelty of this new aggregate of states, which presented itself as a force that would be propelled into the future—into the future, because it saw itself as a continuation of a world history that until then had been mired in an unchanging situation. This emerging sense of self-consciousness expressed an awareness of finality and of mission.

With the end of the Carolingian reign, however, the concept of Europe almost disappeared, surviving only in erudite usage. The term did not become popular currency again until the beginning of the modern era—as a means of self-identification, in response to the Turkish threat—and was asserted more generally in the eighteenth century. Apart from the history of the

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name, the decisive step toward Europe as we understand it today was when the Frankish kingdom constituted itself as the heir to the Roman Empire.

In Byzantium (which considered itself the true Rome), the Roman Empire had withstood the upheaval of migrations and the Islamic invasion. The Eastern Roman Empire continued to advance claims on the Empire's Western half. It extended as far north as the Slavic world and created its own Greco-Roman world that distinguished itself from the Latin Europe of the West by introducing variants in the liturgy and in the ecclesiastical constitution, adopting a different script, and renouncing the use of Latin as the common language.

**T**he two worlds also had enough unifying elements, however, to be considered a single continent. First of all, both the East and the West were the heirs to the Bible and to the ancient Church, which in both worlds refer beyond themselves to an origin that lies outside today's Europe, namely in Palestine. Secondly, both shared the idea of the Roman Empire and of the essential nature of the Church, and therefore of law and legal instruments. The last factor I would mention is monasticism, which throughout the great upheavals of history continued to be the indispensable bearer not only of cultural continuity but above all of fundamental religious and moral values, of the ultimate guidance of humankind. As a pre-political and supra-political force, monasticism was also the bringer of ever-welcome and necessary rebirths of culture and civilization.

Alongside the common ecclesiastical inheritance of the two Europes, however, a profound difference remained. In Byzantium, Empire and Church were virtually identified in each other. The emperor was also the head of the Church. He considered himself a representative of Christ and—following the Biblical example of Melchizedek, who was king and priest at the same time (Genesis 14:18)—he bore the official title, “king and priest,” from the sixth century on. Once the Emperor Constantine had left Rome, the autonomous position of bishop of Rome—as successor to Peter and supreme pastor of the Church—could be transplanted to the ancient capital of the Empire, where a duality of powers had been established at the beginning of the Age of Constantine. Neither the emperor nor the pope was absolute; each had separate powers.

Pope Gelasius I (492-496) expressed his vision of the West in a famous letter to the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I, and, even more clearly in his fourth treatise, where, with reference to the Byzantine model of Melchizedek, he affirmed that the unity of powers lies exclusively in Christ: “Because of human weakness

(pride!), they have separated for the times that followed the two offices, so that neither shall become proud.” On worldly matters, priests should follow the laws of the emperor installed by divine decree, while on divine matters the emperor should submit to the priest. This introduced a separation and distinction of powers that would be of vital importance to the later development of Europe, and laid the foundations for the distinguishing characteristics of the West.

Despite these restrictions, both sides continued to be driven to seek absolute power and to impose their power on the other, making the principle of separation also the source of endless strife. How this principle should be lived properly and how it should be concretized politically and religiously continue to be a fundamental issue in present and future Europe.

**T**he European continent was born from the rise of the Carolingian Empire and the shift of the Roman Empire to Byzantium, with its mission toward the Slavic peoples. If we accept this premise, the beginning of the modern era marked a watershed, a radical change, for the two Europes in both the essence of the continent and its geographic outlines.

In 1453 Constantinople was conquered by the Turks. The historian Otto Hiltbrunner describes the event laconically: “The last . . . learned men emigrated . . . to Italy and passed on their knowledge of the original Greek texts to the Renaissance humanists; but the East was overcome by the absence of culture.” This may be an overstatement, since the reign of the Osmanli dynasty had its own culture, too. The European, Greco-Christian culture of Byzantium, however, did indeed come to an end.

There was a risk that one of the two branches of Europe would disappear, but the Byzantine heritage did not die: Moscow declared itself to be the third Rome, and founded its patriarchate on the principle of a second *translatio imperii* or transplanting of the Empire. Russia thus presented itself as a new metamorphosis of the Holy Roman Empire, as a distinct form of Europe, which nevertheless remained tied to the West and was increasingly oriented toward it, even to the point that Peter the Great sought to turn Russia into a Western country.

This northward expansion of Byzantine Europe meant that the continent's borders also began to extend toward the East. While the choice of the Urals as the border may have been exceedingly arbitrary, the world to the east of the Urals became a kind of substructure of Europe, neither Asian nor European, that was substantially forged by the European subject at the same time as it was excluded from having subject status itself. It

became the object rather than the architect of its own history, not unlike a colonial state.

At the beginning of the modern era, two events took place that were at the base of non-Western, Byzantine Europe: the break-up of ancient Byzantium and of its historical continuity with the Roman Empire; and the establishment of a second Europe, with a new capital in Moscow, whose borders extended eastward, and of a type of pre-colonial structure in Siberia.

During the same period, two events of major historical significance also took place in the West. The first is that most of the Germanic world broke away from Rome. The rise of a new, "enlightened" form of Christianity drew a separation line through the "West" that clearly marked not just a geographical but also a cultural *limes*: a border between two different ways of thinking and relating. Within the Protestant world, there was also a rupture between Lutherans and the Reformed churches. At the same time, the Church of England tried to steer a middle course between Catholics and Protestants. These divisions were later amplified by the difference between Christianity as a form of state religion, which came to be identified with Europe, and the free churches, which would find their home in North America.

The eastward expansion of Europe, through the progressive expansion of Russia into Asia, corresponded to a radical westward expansion of Europe to a world given the name "America" on the other side of the ocean. The subdivision of Europe into a Catholic half and a Protestant half came to be reflected in the part of the new world occupied by Europe. At first America was perceived as an outpost of Europe, a colony. In the wake of the French Revolution and the upheaval it sparked in Europe, however, America took on the characteristics of a subject. From the nineteenth century on, although America had been shaped by its European birth, it became an independent subject in its dealings with Europe.

Although the Holy Roman Empire had been in decline since the late Middle Ages, and it had faded also as an agreed-upon interpretation of history, it was not until the French Revolution that the spiritual framework it provided—and without which Europe could not have been formed—would shatter in a formal sense. This process had a major impact on both politics and ideals. In terms of ideals, there was a rejection of the sacred foundation both of history and of the state. History was no longer measured on the basis of an idea of God that had preceded it and given it shape. The state came to be understood in purely secular terms, based on rationalism and the will of citizens.

The secular state arose for the first time, abandoning and excluding any divine guarantee or legitimation of the political element as a mythological vision of the world and declaring that God is a private question that does not belong to the public sphere or to the democratic formation of the public will. Public life was now considered the realm of reason alone, which had no place for a seemingly unknowable God. From this perspective, religion and faith in God belonged to the realm of sentiment, not of reason. God and His will therefore ceased to be relevant to public life.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a new schism thus developed, the gravity of which we are only now grasping. There is no word for this schism in German, because in Germany it emerged very slowly. The romance languages, by contrast, define it as a division between Christians and "lay" people. Over the past two centuries, a deep rift has opened between the two groups in the Latin nations. Protestant Christianity, by contrast, was initially able to accommodate liberal enlightenment ideas without jeopardizing the framework of a broad Christian consensus. The ancient idea of empire was shattered by the formation of nation states—defined by their distinctive linguistic spheres—which proved to be the true bearers of history and of unprecedented power. In the place of empire there was a plural historical subject, the great European nations, whose drama was that each considered itself the depository of a universal mission, creating potential conflicts whose fatal impact we have experienced so painfully in the century that has just elapsed.

The two halves of ancient premodern Europe had essentially known only one next-door neighbor, with whom they had to negotiate as a matter of life and death: the Islamic world. It was only a question of time before they would expand toward America and in part toward Asia, continents that were lacking in great cultural protagonists. Still later, Europe would begin to make incursions into two continents, Africa and Asia, that it had previously dealt with only marginally, and that it would seek to transform into European colonial franchises.

If colonization could be considered a success, it is in the sense that contemporary Asia and Africa can also pursue the ideal of a world shaped by technology and prosperity. Yet there, too, the ancient religious traditions are undergoing a crisis and secular thinking has made inroads and begun to dominate public life. Yet these processes have also produced the opposite effect: Islam has been reborn, in part because of the new material wealth acquired by the Islamic countries, but mainly because of people's conviction that Islam could provide a valid spiritual foundation to their lives. Such a

foundation seems to have eluded old Europe, which, despite its enduring political and economic power, seems to be on the road to decline and fall.

By contrast to Europe's denial of its religious and moral foundations, Asia's great religious traditions, especially the mystical component expressed in Buddhism, have been elevated as spiritual powers. The optimism in European culture that Arnold Toynbee could still voice in the early 1960s sounds strangely antiquated today. "Of the twenty-eight cultures that we have identified . . . eighteen are dead and nine of the ten left—i.e., all except our own—already appear to be mortally wounded." Who would repeat these same words today? Above all, what is our culture, and what has remained of it? Is European culture perhaps nothing more than the technology and trade civilization that has marched triumphantly across the planet? Or is it instead a post-European culture born on the ruins of the ancient European cultures?

There is a paradoxical synchrony in these developments. The victory of the post-European techno-secular world and the universalization of its lifestyle and thinking have spread the impression (especially in Asia and Africa) that Europe's value system, culture, and faith—in other words, the very foundations of its identity—have reached the end of the road and have indeed already disappeared. From this perspective, the time has come for the affirmation of value systems of other worlds, such as pre-Colombian America, Islam, or Asian mysticism.

At the hour of its greatest success, Europe seems hollow, as if it were internally paralyzed by a failure of its circulatory system that is endangering its life, subjecting it to transplants that erase its identity. At the same time as its sustaining spiritual forces have collapsed, a growing decline in its ethnicity is also taking place.

Europe is infected by a strange lack of desire for the future. Children, our future, are perceived as a threat to the present, as though they were taking something away from our lives. Children are seen—at least by some people—as a liability rather than as a source of hope. Here it is obligatory to compare today's situation with the decline of the Roman Empire. In its final days, Rome still functioned as a great historical framework, but in practice its vital energy had been depleted.

Which brings us to the problems of the present. There are two opposing diagnoses of the possible future of Europe. On the one hand, there is the thesis of Oswald Spengler, who believed that he had identified a natural law for the great moments in cultural history: First comes the birth of a culture, then its gradual rise, flourishing, slow decline, aging, and death. Spen-

gler argued his thesis with examples culled from the history of cultures demonstrating the law of the natural life cycle. His thesis was that the West would come to an end, and that it was rushing heedlessly toward its demise, despite every effort to stop it. Europe could of course bequeath its gifts to a new emerging culture—following the example set by previous cultures during their decline—but as a historical subject its life cycle had effectively ended.

Spengler's "biologistic" thesis attracted fierce opponents during the period between the two wars, especially in Catholic circles. Arnold Toynbee reserved harsh words for it, in arguments too readily ignored today. Toynbee emphasized the difference between technological-material progress and true progress, which he defined as spiritualization. He recognized that the Western world was indeed undergoing a crisis, which he attributed to the abandonment of religion for the cult of technology, nationalism, and militarism. For him this crisis had a name: secularism. If you know the cause of an illness, you can also find a cure: The religious heritage in all its forms had to be reintroduced, especially the "heritage of Western Christianity." Rather than a biologistic vision, he offered a voluntaristic one focused on the energy of creative minorities and exceptional individuals.

Which leads us to the question of whether Toynbee's diagnosis is correct. If it is, then we must ask whether it is in our power to reintroduce the religious dimension through a synthesis of what remains of Christianity and the religious heritage of humankind. Which factors will guarantee the future, and which have allowed the inner identity of Europe to survive throughout its metamorphoses in history? To put it more simply, what can still promise, today and tomorrow, to offer human dignity to life?

Since the French Revolution, two new European models have developed. In the Latin nations the lay model has prevailed. They sharply distinguish the state from religious bodies, deeming them to fall under the private sphere. The state denies that it has a religious foundation and affirms that it is based on reason and rational knowledge. Since reason is inherently fragile, however, these lay systems have proved to be weak, becoming easy prey for dictatorships. They survive only because elements of the old moral conscience have persevered, even without the earlier foundations, making it possible for a basic moral consensus to exist.

In the Germanic world, the liberal Protestant model of church and state has prevailed. According to this model, an enlightened Christian religion—conceived of as essentially moral and involving state-supported forms of worship—guarantees a moral consen-

sus and a broad religious foundation to which the single non-state religions must conform. This model has long guaranteed state and social cohesion in Great Britain, the Scandinavian states, and once upon a time also in Prussian-dominated Germany. In Germany, however, the collapse of Prussian state Christianity left a vacuum that would later provide fertile terrain for the dictatorship. Today state churches throughout the world are marked by fatigue. Moral force—the foundation on which to build—does not emanate from the religious bodies dependent on the state or from the state itself.

Situated between the two models is the model of the United States of America. Formed on the basis of free churches, it adopts a separation between church and state. Above and beyond the single denominations, it is characterized by a Protestant Christian consensus that is not defined in denominational terms but rather in association with its sense of a special religious mission toward the rest of the world. The religious sphere thus acquires a significant weight in public affairs and emerges as a pre-political and supra-political force with the potential to have a decisive impact on political life. One can of course not hide the fact that in the United States, too, the Christian heritage is decaying at an incessant pace, while at the same time the rapid increase in the Hispanic population and the presence of religious traditions from all over the world have changed the picture.

To complicate the picture, we have to acknowledge that the Catholic Church today represents the largest single religious community in the United States, while American Catholics have absorbed the free-church traditions on the relation between the Church and politics, believing that a Church that is separate from the state better guarantees the moral foundation as a whole. Hence the promotion of the democratic ideal is seen as a moral duty that is in profound compliance with the faith. In this position we can rightly see a continuation, adapted to the times, of the model of Pope Gelasius described earlier.

**B**ut in Europe, in the nineteenth century, the two models were joined by a third, socialism, which quickly split into two different branches, one totalitarian and the other democratic. Democratic socialism managed to fit within the two existing models as a welcome counterweight to the radical liberal positions, which it developed and corrected. It also managed to appeal to various denominations. In England it became the political party of the Catholics, who had never felt at home among either the Protestant conservatives or the liberals. In Wilhelmine Germany, too, Catholic groups felt closer to democratic socialism

than to the rigidly Prussian and Protestant conservative forces. In many respects, democratic socialism was and is close to Catholic social doctrine and has in any case made a remarkable contribution to the formation of a social consciousness.

The totalitarian model, by contrast, was associated with a rigidly materialistic, atheistic philosophy of history: It saw history deterministically, as a road of progress that passes first through the religious and then through the liberal phase to arrive at an absolute, ultimate society in which religion is surpassed as a relic of the past and collective happiness is guaranteed by the workings of material conditions.

**T**his scientific façade hides an intolerant dogmatism that views the spirit as produced by matter and morals as produced by circumstances. According to its dictates, morals should be defined and practiced on the basis of society's purposes, and everything is moral that helps to usher in the final state of happiness. This dogmatism completely subverts the values that built Europe. It also breaks with the entire moral tradition of humankind by rejecting the existence of values independent of the goals of material progress. Depending on circumstance, anything can become legitimate and even necessary; anything can become moral in the new sense of the term. Even humankind itself can be treated as an instrument, since the individual does not matter, only the future, the cruel deity adjudicating over one and all.

The Communist systems collapsed under the weight of their own fallacious economic dogmatism. Commentators have nevertheless ignored all too readily the role played by the Communists' contempt for human rights and their subordination of morals to the demands of the system and the promise of a future. The greatest catastrophe encountered by such systems was not economic. It was the starvation of souls and the destruction of the moral conscience.

The essential problem of our times, for Europe and for the world, is that although the fallacy of the Communist economy has been recognized, its moral and religious fallacy has not been addressed. The unresolved issue of Marxism lives on: the crumbling of man's original uncertainties about God, himself, and the universe. The decline of a moral conscience grounded in absolute values is still our problem, and left untreated, it can lead to the self-destruction of the European conscience, which we must begin to consider as a real danger—above and beyond the decline predicted by Spengler.

Amid the major upheavals of our day, is there a European identity that has a future and to which we can commit whole-heartedly?

A first element is the unconditionality with which human rights and human dignity should be presented as values that take precedence over any state jurisdiction. Fundamental rights are neither created by the lawmaker nor granted to the citizen. The value of human dignity, which takes precedence over all political action and all political decision-making, refers to the Creator: Only He can establish values that are grounded in the essence of humankind and are inviolable. The existence of values that cannot be modified by anyone is the true guarantee of our freedom and human greatness. In this fact, the Christian faith sees the mystery of the Creator and the condition of man, who was made in God's image.

Today almost no one would openly deny the primacy of human dignity and basic human rights over any political decision. The horrors of Nazism and its racist doctrine are still too fresh in memory. But in the sphere of medicine and technology today, there are real threats to these values. If one considers cloning, the storing of human fetuses for research purposes and organ harvesting, and the whole field of genetic manipulation, no one can fail to have noticed the slow erosion of human dignity that threatens us. The situation is only made worse by the increased trafficking in human beings, new forms of slavery, and trafficking in human organs for the sake of transplants. To justify such unjustifiable means, "good ends" are cited repeatedly.

A second element that characterizes European identity is marriage and the family. Monogamous marriage—both as a fundamental structure for the relation between men and women and as the nucleus for the formation of the state community—was forged in the biblical faith. It gave its special physiognomy and its special humanity to Europe, both in the West and in the East, precisely because the form of fidelity and the sacrifice that it entails must always be regained through great efforts and suffering.

Europe would no longer be Europe if this fundamental nucleus of its social edifice were to vanish or be changed in an essential way. We all know how much marriage and the family are in jeopardy. Their integrity has been undermined by the easier forms of divorce at the same time as there has been a spread in the practice of cohabitation between men and women without the legal form of marriage. Paradoxically, homosexuals are now demanding that their unions be granted a legal form that is more or less equivalent to marriage. Such a development would fall outside the whole moral history of humanity that, whatever the diverse legal forms, has never lost sight of the fact that marriage is essentially the special communion of man and woman, which opens itself to children and thus to family.

The question this raises is not of discrimination but of what constitutes the human person as a man or as a woman, and which union should receive a legal form. If the union between man and woman has strayed further and further from legal forms, and if homosexual unions are perceived more and more as enjoying the same standing as marriage, then we are truly facing a dissolution of the image of humankind bearing consequences that can only be extremely grave.

The last element of the European identity is religion. I do not wish to enter into the complex discussion of recent years, but to highlight one issue that is fundamental to all cultures: respect for that which another group holds sacred, especially respect for the sacred in the highest sense, for God, which one can reasonably expect to find even among those who are not willing to believe in God. When this respect is violated in a society, something essential is lost. In European society today, thank goodness, anyone who dishonors the faith of Israel, its image of God, or its great figures must pay a fine. The same holds true for anyone who dishonors the Koran and the convictions of Islam. But when it comes to Jesus Christ and that which is sacred to Christians, freedom of speech becomes the supreme good.

This case illustrates a peculiar Western self-hatred that is nothing short of pathological. It is commendable that the West is trying to be more open, to be more understanding of the values of outsiders, but it has lost all capacity for self-love. All that it sees in its own history is the despicable and the destructive; it is no longer able to perceive what is great and pure. What Europe needs is a new self-acceptance, a self-acceptance that is critical and humble, if it truly wishes to survive.

Multiculturalism, which is so passionately promoted, can sometimes amount to an abandonment and denial, a flight from one's own things. Multiculturalism teaches us to approach the sacred things of others with respect, but we can do this only if we ourselves are not estranged from the sacred, from God. With regard to others, it is our duty to cultivate within ourselves respect for the sacred and to show the face of the revealed God—the God who has compassion for the poor and the weak, for widows and orphans, for the foreigner; the God who is so human that he himself became man, a man who suffered, and who by his suffering with us gave dignity and hope to our pain.

Unless we embrace our own heritage of the sacred, we will not only deny the identity of Europe. We will also fail in providing a service to others to which they are entitled. To the other cultures of the world, there is something deeply alien about the absolute secularism that is developing in the West. They are convinced that

a world without God has no future. Multiculturalism itself thus demands that we return once again to ourselves.

We do not know what the future of Europe will be. Here we must agree with Toynbee, that the fate of a

society always depends on its creative minorities. Christian believers should look upon themselves as just such a creative minority, helping Europe to reclaim what is best in its heritage and thereby to place itself at the service of all humankind. FT

## Annual Returns

If money grew on trees,  
How happy we'd be then,  
The children rolling in dough,  
The fathers raking it in.

With holdings in the branches  
Showing a big return,  
The Trees would drop a fortune,  
We'd all have money to burn.

As autumn leaves, however,  
We find the poor still poor.  
The falling stocks in trees  
Are swept away from the door.

So what became of the boy  
Whom teachers had to scold,  
Who stared and stared out windows  
Into the lands of gold,

Where after school he spent  
His lonely afternoons  
And shuffled home knee-deep  
In rubies and doubloons?

He listens to the leaves  
That raffle in a squall,  
Still dreaming of a world  
That profits from the fall.

*Greg Williamson*

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# Protestant-Catholic-Jew, Then and Now

Kevin M. Schultz

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In the winter of 1954, Will Herberg, the best untrained sociologist in America, turned his attention to the sociology of American religion. Nine months later, he emerged with *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, still a classic of American religious history.

Fifty years after its first publication, Herberg's critique of pluralism is still impressive, as are his ideas about the importance of group identities and his derision of "the melting pot." And yet, one cannot help wondering if Herberg was right in his description of America. Was American social life really divided into three separate parts, one Protestant, one Catholic, one Jewish? Despite these divisions, was there really an "overarching sense of unity," a "common religion," that most Americans believed? Although the book reminds us of a time when deep social divisiveness was not at the core of the culture wars, was he right to suggest that religion was an under-acknowledged party in American discussions about pluralism? Were postwar Catholics and Jews the first multiculturalists?

*Protestant-Catholic-Jew* made two large claims—that America contained a "triple melting pot" and that the religious revival of the 1950s was essentially superficial—though really only the first is much remembered. Herberg's "triple melting pot" idea was relatively simple. He had little use for the notions of Israel Zangwill, who had popularized the phrase "melting pot" in the title of a 1908 play, or of Henry Ford's image of a foreigner jumping into the pot and coming out in a gray flannel suit waving an American flag.

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Still, Herberg said, these ideas were only partly wrong. It was true that national-origin identities had softened since the restrictive immigration laws of the 1920s. It was also true that working-class identities had been weakened by the broadening of the American middle-class and by the demonization of Soviet-style socialism. Sectarian differences within the major faiths had dulled as well. (As one of the book's great blind spots, Herberg did not spend much time considering racial divisions in America, calling them an "anomaly of considerable importance" to his general scheme.)

Instead, he focused on the "triple melting pot," which posited that, while most other identities had fallen away, religious divisions between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews had not. To be an Irish American did not matter so much, but to be Catholic carried social significance. To be a Methodist was only nominally or regionally important, but to be Protestant meant something.

Herberg acknowledged they were all Bible-based, Abrahamic faiths and therefore had some things in common. But he was more interested in the fact that each religion was presumed to possess the same "spiritual values" of "the American Way of Life," by which he meant a soft-hearted faith in democracy (political, economic, and religious) combined with a more robust faith in idealism, activism, and moral conviction. Coming in the wake of several interfaith battles where Catholics were thought to be insufficiently independent from the dictates of a foreign pope and Jews were chastised for advocating an extreme separation of church and state, Herberg's claim of the fundamental equality of the three faiths showed the progression of diversity-acceptance in postwar America. It also per-

haps displayed some of his own insecurities as an American Jew.

Herberg was not the first to suggest the existence of the "triple melting pot." He borrowed the phrase from Ruby Jo Kennedy, a sociologist who published in 1944 an article on intermarriage in New Haven called "Single or Triple Melting Pot?" Kennedy had examined 9,044 marriages from several different years (1870, 1900, 1930, and 1940) to chart the decline of endogamy among people of the same nationality (Irish, Italian, Polish, etc.) and the rise of endogamy among the three religious groups. By 1940, Kennedy found that, in New Haven at least, Catholics married Catholics 85 percent of the time. Protestants married Protestants nearly 80 percent of the time. And Jews married Jews 94 percent of the time. "Culture [i.e. ethnic] lines may fade," she concluded from her study, "but religious barriers are holding fast."

Another of Herberg's predecessors was August Hollingshead, a distinguished mid-century sociologist. By 1952, Hollingshead had concluded that in America "two social worlds have evolved—a Negro world and a white world. The white world is divided by ethnic origin and religion into Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish contingents." Another sociologist, George Stewart, had written in 1954 that if Americans did expect foreigners to change their language, "we did not really expect a man to change his faith." Meanwhile, Oscar Handlin had written in his 1954 textbook, *The American People in the Twentieth Century*, "religious activities fell into a fundamental tripartite division that had begun to take form earlier in the century. Men were Catholics, Protestants, or Jews, categories based less on theological than on social distinctions."

Herberg simplified and amplified the findings of these more cautious predecessors. He claimed that nearly every facet of mid-century American society could be divided into three social camps: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. "By and large," he said, "to be an American today means to be either a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew. . . . Not to be a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Jew today is," he concluded, "not to be anything, not to have a name."

This was a bold and broad thesis, and in hindsight one finds the book's evidence for it a bit thin. Herberg attempted to demonstrate the lack of intermarriage between the three big faiths, and he cited several sociological studies to prove the point, including Kennedy's. Then he repeatedly used polls to show that, when Americans were asked what their faith was, roughly 95 percent of them responded by saying either Protestant, Catholic, or Jew.

That was about it. Perhaps Herberg felt that his "triple melting pot" theory was so logical or obvious to mid-century Americans that it would go unchallenged. The early reviews of the book demonstrate that this might not have been far from the truth. Many picked at parts of his evidence, but few disputed the large-scale scheme. Today, however, when religious divisions between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews have declined, the evidentiary grounds upon which he stood seems less clear.

Still, Herberg spent considerable energy demonstrating the unity within each of the three faiths, and here he is more impressive. Herberg was fascinated that "American Protestants experience no difficulty in passing from one denomination to another when social or personal convenience requires." Nor did he find any "real difficulties" in marriage among people of differing denominations. And several Protestant parachurch groups had formed since World War II, suggesting the growing institutional unity within a religious group famously divided by sectarian differences.

For their part, Catholics had developed an incredible number of institutions designed solely for use by American Catholics. There were Catholic baseball teams, sewing circles, bowling leagues, hospitals, orphanages, welfare agencies, boy scouts, war veterans, associations of doctors, lawyers, teachers, students, and philosophers. There were also Catholic leagues of policemen, firemen, and sanitary workers. And there was, of course, the immense Catholic educational system, which boasted between three and five million students—more than half of all of the Catholic children of elementary-school age. Taken together, this Catholic social system constituted "a self-contained Catholic world." Herberg pointed out the increasing number of marriages between Irish and Italian Catholics, a union that at one time had been taboo but which was now deemed acceptable because both parties were Catholic.

As for Jews, Herberg cited surveys showing that Jews were increasingly seeking to retain their Jewish identity, a conscious decision that prevented both assimilation and intermarriage. Almost 100 percent of the adolescents in one sample thought of Jews in religious terms rather than racial or ethnic ones, meaning that they no longer associated themselves with the contingent of Eastern European ethnics who had moved to America during the first two decades of the twentieth century. They were no longer *ethnically* Jewish, but religiously so. Jewish holidays were celebrated lavishly, and Herberg cited one poll that found that 50 percent of American Jews replied affirmatively to a question

about being an active member of a synagogue. Mid-century American Jews, then, were growing in number, increasing their unity, and showing no sign of willingly assimilating into a broader "American" identity.

The triple melting pot was a living and breathing thing, Herberg concluded, and it was showing no sign of decline in the middle 1950s or in the foreseeable future. When Americans answered the question, "Who am I?" they thought primarily in religious terms: "I am a Jew" or "I am a Catholic" or "I am a Protestant." Thus Herberg concluded with what became the book's most famous line: "America today may be conceived, as it is indeed conceived by most Americans, as one great community divided into three big sub-communities religiously defined."

If Herberg's "triple melting pot" idea is fairly well remembered today, the second point Herberg sought to make is more often forgotten. Arguing that mid-century America made religion important for all the wrong reasons, Herberg insisted that Americans identified with one of the three big faiths in order to be accepted. Borrowing heavily from David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, Herberg noted the need to be recognized in society, or, to use Riesman's phrase, to have a "brand name." This was how one advanced in an "other-directed society," where society judged a person by how he or she presented him or herself.

Submitting religion to Riesman's analysis, Herberg concluded that religious identities were the "brand name" that mid-century Americans relied on. In fact, Herberg concluded, "not to identify oneself and be identified as . . . a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew is somehow not to be an American." Atheists and agnostics were un-American. Buddhists and Muslims were foreign. "To be a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew are today the alternative ways of being an American."

The result, Herberg suggested, was not only that the three big religions were allowing people of minimal faith to enter their buildings, but that they were, more damningly, making concessions to keep these half-hearted believers in the pews. To assert their credentials as Jews, mid-century Americans filled synagogues, but they did so only because they wanted to be seen as firm in their belief, not because they wanted to keep kosher. Conservative synagogues found this more than acceptable, Herberg complained, and in fact they had become increasingly sympathetic to the practices of the reform denominations in order to maintain their membership. Herberg complained that such religion, "however sincere and well-meant," is "ultimately vitiated by a strong and pervasive idolatrous element." Americans of 1955 practiced "religiousness without religion, a religiousness with almost any kind of content or none, a

way of sociability or 'belonging' rather than a way of reorienting life to God. It is thus frequently a religiousness without serious commitment, without real inner conviction, without genuine existential decision."

In the argument of *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, if the specific dogmatic elements of each faith were not important, then religion must have become simply one way a minority group could ease its way into the mainstream. Religion had become the central mode of earning acceptance, although what was unique about this particular type of assimilation was that nobody expected religious minorities—Catholics or Jews—to depart fully from the tenets of their faith. They could remain Catholic or Jewish and still be good Americans.

This, then, was certainly not assimilation, nor was it the melting pot. Today's notions of multiculturalism insist on acceptance of group identities and give priority to harmonious, society-wide group relations. *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* is an early articulation of this ideal. Catholics and Jews, Herberg was saying, were rightful participants in American society, despite the fact that they were not Protestants. With a common ideological foundation—the American Way of Life—underlying each social group, the three groups could then properly contest for society's rewards. The "communal tensions" between the groups were "of major importance in the life of the nation," Herberg added, suggesting that they began non-divisive discussions about the limits of American democracy and allowed all 96 percent of Americans who identified as Protestant, Catholic, or Jew to have some social, political, and cultural recognition in America. In theory at least, they achieved what the advocates of today's multiculturalism so desperately seek.

Upon its release, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* was an immediate success, although then, as today, most people ignored Herberg's second, more indicting thesis. The book sold well, and was reviewed even better. The *New York Times* assigned as a reviewer Reinhold Niebuhr, without a doubt the most famous theologian in America at the time. Niebuhr called *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* "the most fascinating essay on the religious sociology of America that has appeared in decades." Within three weeks of its release, more than forty reviews appeared, causing Herberg to write, "It is obvious that the book is making something of a sensation."

For most reviewers, the book seemed to explain the social dynamics of religion in America to an audience well aware that religion was important, but not entirely sure of its dynamics. Religion-watchers were dubious of the religiosity of the 1950s revival; religious minorities were uncertain of the accepting nature of the

revival; and culture-watchers were unsure what it all meant. How had *Going My Way*'s Father O'Malley and the Goldbergs both become cultural icons in what had so recently been Protestant America?

Herberg supplied them with an answer. And because of this, he was cited in almost every major sociological book for the next decade. Milton Gordon relied on Herberg in his landmark work, *Assimilation in American Life*. E. Digby Baltzell, the great chronicler of America's Wasp elite, repeatedly cited Herberg as well in *The Protestant Establishment*.

But was Herberg accurate in his description of mid-century America? When we consider his pessimism about Americans' depth of belief, I am reminded of the words of Herberg's contemporary, Walter Reuther, who admitted that he was frightened to pass judgment "on the purity of one another's motives." It is revealing, however, that many who did join churches and synagogues in the 1950s were quick to leave them once their children had grown up, once Vatican II changed the way of Catholic worship, once the Civil Rights Movement put on display the un-religious practices of many of America's mainline churches.

It seems inexcusable that Herberg did not really acknowledge the deepening racial divisions in American society. But upon re-reading Herberg, one senses that he was being honest in leaving black people out of his social analysis. He was, it seems, acknowledging a social truth about race in America during the 1950s, namely that racial minorities did not matter much to the goings-on of mainstream society. This was egregious to be sure, and I have the feeling that Herberg would agree it was too. But Herberg had set out to describe the varieties of Americanism in the 1950s, and one cannot help but confront the fact that, in this period, to a great many mid-century Americans, being black was not quite being American.

Beyond this oversight, Herberg's triple melting pot theory has come under some scrutiny over the decades, although few scholars have seriously engaged the thesis since the 1970s. From the beginning, Baptists, especially in the South, were not sure they were ready to marry other Protestants as much as Herberg claimed they were, and they wondered aloud about the unity of American Protestantism.

More forthright complaints came in the early 1960s from a number of Jewish authors worried about what they called the "identity crisis" of American Judaism. As early as six years after the release of *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, many young Jewish intellectuals admitted feeling little attachment to their Jewish faith. The cause, they mostly said, was widespread success. As Philip Roth put it, "What a Jew wants and how he goes

after it, does not on the whole appear to differ radically from what his Gentile neighbor wants and how he goes after it." Samuel Shapiro wrote, "the postwar prosperity and the consequent decline of anti-Semitism have . . . tended to make us as smooth and bland as any other group of successful middle-class Americans."

Many sociologists began chipping away at Herberg's reliance on intermarriage data. In 1962, Werner Cahnman edited a volume called *Intermarriage and Jewish Life*, which argued that fully 20 percent of all Jewish marriages were mixed. In 1963, Erich Rosenthal published a study on Jewish intermarriage rates in Washington, D.C., which confirmed Cahnman's numbers. In 1964, Marshall Sklare similarly found that Jews were intermarrying at a high rate. Sklare concluded that until the early 1960s American Jews had been smug about the issue, assuming intermarriage was only an occasional aberration. Several recent studies, however, had served as "one of the first signs that this community may at last be preparing to recognize that a problem does exist." He blamed Herberg for assisting in the sense of smugness Jews felt about intermarriage. Thomas B. Morgan's famous 1964 *Look* article, "The Vanishing American Jew," made similar claims.

Meanwhile, in the early 1970s, social observers began protesting the nature of Herberg's "melting pot" analysis. Ignoring his comments about the necessary persistence of group identities in an "other-directed" society, Herberg's use of the phrase "melting pot" made him a target to those who saw continuing ethnic particularism. Most memorable in this vein was Michael Novak's *Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics*, but many other ethnic particularists emerged in the 1970s to complain about the conception of the melting pot as well. With the rise of race as a serious social concern, and with the defense of group rights and ethnic particularism, Herberg's star declined.

A second edition of *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* came out in 1960, but after that the book was not re-published until 1983, when historians began to cite the book as a descriptive text of the 1950s. Professional journals and academics generally favored interpretations of American society that focused more on race than religion. And in 1967, a federal committee, the Kerner Commission, declared that America was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." With the rise of race as an issue of major sociological importance, Herberg's book became a quaint tale of American innocence before the fall.

Moreover, if Herberg was clairvoyant in his discussion of diversity, he was blind when it came to the future of American religiousness. His entire book was based around his assumption that Americans' faith was

weak. What Herberg did not see coming was the resurgence of a split between liberal Protestants and evangelicals—a split that would rejuvenate Protestant fervor throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century. A useful starting date for this rejuvenation is the same 1955 in which *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* appeared—for that was also the year of the founding of *Christianity Today*, a magazine by and for Protestant evangelicals.

The division between liberals and evangelicals has a long history, but many institutions formed during the 1950s, and then of course the social activism of the 1960s, sped things up considerably. As Robert Wuthnow has shown in *The Restructuring of American Religion*, evangelicals of the 1960s resisted social activism and the causes behind it, while liberal Protestants were more willing to participate. This precipitated a split in the manifestations of belief between the two parties, one that exists today. While it is difficult to draw exact parallels, this division between liberals and evangelicals affected Catholics and Jews as well, leading to a time when it was less important that you were Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, and more important that you were conservative or liberal in your faith.

Herberg saw none of this coming. Still, he touched on several truths about the 1950s, even if they are hard to see today with our race- and ethnicity-colored glasses. For instance, several seminal organizations began tabulating the number of religious adherents in the middle of the century, including the United States Census Bureau, something that widely attests to the importance of religious identities. Catholics, meanwhile, were indeed in the middle of what some scholars have called a “Catholic Renaissance” where they expressed their group’s unity more profoundly than before. Jews, too, were relatively uni-

fied and publicly noticeable in their struggles against racism, anti-Semitism, and public displays of religion. And Protestants possessed a sense of unity as well, mostly when confronted by Catholics seeking public money for parochial schools or Jews seeking to oust Bible readings from public schools and other practices that seemed to cross the church-state line.

Herberg, in fact, was on to something that many of today’s historians have seemed to forget. Religion was vitally important as a social marker in mid-century society. Perhaps this is why *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* resonates today as a harbinger of multiculturalism. Unlike nearly all his predecessors, who either supported the “melting pot” or the ill-defined pluralism ideal, Herberg understood that there was a contested middle ground between assimilation and particularism. He accepted the persistence of group identities, but he rejected the notion of particularism, where people from different backgrounds get to keep in full what it was that made them unique. For a nation to exist, there had to be some common ground. But people also needed to maintain an allegiance to a smaller group identity to maintain a healthy individual identity.

*Protestant-Catholic-Jew* should perhaps be remembered as one effort to find a sustainable middle. Postwar Jews were emerging from a pattern of pre-war defensiveness. Barriers to social clubs and neighborhoods were falling, and Jews were moving into neighborhoods and novels in a way that they never had before. Catholics, meanwhile, were entering the mainstream as well. There was a Catholic literary revival during these years, monsignors were appearing on the cover of *Time*, and a Catholic was well on his way to becoming president. And Jews and Catholics were doing all this without having to give up the identity that made them unique. This indeed was multiculturalism—a kind of multiculturalism worth preserving. FT

## At the Paradise Bar

Indeed, time’s elastic—stretching out toward Heaven.  
The sign reads “Happy Hour—4 to 7.”

*David Middleton*

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# Spirit in the Abstract

*Algis Valiunas*

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**T**he last American painters of colossal spiritual ambition were such artists as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, Clyfford Still, Adolph Gottlieb, Robert Motherwell—the Abstract Expressionists. It is chiefly the scale of this ambition that unites these figures, for their spiritual beliefs and artistic practice covered a spectrum too broad for any snug label.

Some were clearly abstract (Pollock, Rothko, Newman), others strongly biomorphic (Gorky, Motherwell) or on occasion defiantly figurative (de Kooning). None was really expressionist after the manner of early twentieth-century German expressionism, though some of de Kooning's best work comes close. Pollock was the most obviously expressionist in the mid-century American sense of discovering and unloosing his truest self in his art. Newman on the other hand found "expressionism" to be a catch-all term for the promotion of vague and slovenly feeling, and he declared for an art of philosophical clarity and rigor. It was not without reason that de Kooning insisted, "It is disastrous to name ourselves." Rothko for his part blamed the ill-fitting moniker on uncomprehending outsiders; he claimed to be neither abstract (quite untrue) nor expressionist (more true than not).

The grand conception of the artist's spiritual capacity and visionary role, however, they all partook of. When the painter and exigent pedagogue Hans Hofmann suggested Pollock work from nature, Pollock flashed, "I *am* nature." Others, though less exorbitant in their self-regard, possessed an equally exalted sense of their calling. Motherwell intended to probe not only nature but the supernatural as deeply as a man can reach: "I know that there is a world of the spirit that can be approached, that its being is undeniable once one

has experienced it . . . [and] that one would die for it." Still said of his own art that "a single stroke of paint, backed by work and a mind that understood its potency and implications, could restore to man the freedom lost in twenty centuries of apology and devices for subjugation." Newman averred that if his painting were properly understood "it would mean the end of all state capitalism and totalitarianism."

Three recent books contribute to the painters' legendary status as modernist grand masters. Rothko's *The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art*, a text written probably in 1940 but discovered in his papers only in 1988, eighteen years after his suicide, shows an artist celebrated for philosophizing in paint could also philosophize in prose. *Barnett Newman: A Catalogue Raisonné* gathers reproductions of Newman's painted oeuvre and includes introductory essays that focus on both the paintings and the artist's voluminous writings. And Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan's *De Kooning: An American Master* is the first biography of the painter whom some regard as the greatest of the Abstract Expressionists. The three books together eloquently summon the artists' efforts to realize their titanic ambition of rendering the living truth and transforming the world through their painting.

Mark Rothko was born in 1905 as Marcus Rothkowitz, a Russian Jew who emigrated to America as a boy and settled with his parents in Seattle. He attended Yale for a couple years, but found the place intellectually deficient. Determined to become a painter, he went to New York and started working hard. By 1940 he had begun treating mythic subjects in a surrealist manner; falling prey to depression—an illness that would rack his life and eventually take it—he stopped painting for a year or so in 1940, and apparently wrote his book during that time. *The Artist's Reality* examines what Rothko considers the artistic undertaking throughout history: the attempt to

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encompass the physical and spiritual worlds in painted and sculpted forms that represent the myths peculiar to each time and place. All art since the Renaissance (which, he declared, deposed the Christian vision and thereby parted intellect from sensation) has been “a nostalgic yearning for a myth” that would render and restore “the utmost fullness of reality.”

The most modern of artists, by whom Rothko evidently means himself and such friends as Barnett Newman and Adolph Gottlieb, might just be coming closer to fulfilling this need than any previous artists. To join sensory experience once again to metaphysical truth is the stated aim: Light is the earthly channel to truth, so painters are best equipped to direct men toward the world beyond the world we see. The artist “tries to give human beings direct contact with eternal verities through reduction of those verities to the realm of sensuality”—a word he tends to use interchangeably with sensuousness—“which is the basic language for the human experience of all things.” Rothko hoped to take on human nature at its farthest reach, as it extends toward the ultimate mysteries: “In our hope for the heroic, and the knowledge that art must be heroic, we cannot but wish for the communal myth again. Who would not rather paint the soul-searching agonies of Giotto than the apples of Chardin, for all the love we have for them?”

Rothko believed he was painting such soul-searching agonies, as well as transfiguring joys, even in the highly abstract paintings he did from the late 1940s till the end of his life—the meditations in color that are what everyone thinks of when Rothkos are mentioned. In 1943, with Newman and Gottlieb, he wrote a letter to a *New York Times* art critic in which he insisted, “the subject [of a painting] is crucial and only that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless.” In a 1958 lecture he said that neither his paintings nor Gottlieb’s were abstract, and he declared “a clear preoccupation with death” to be one of the essential aspects of any serious painting.

Not everyone, however, sees what Rothko himself sees when he looks at a Rothko. Hilton Kramer, editor of the *New Criterion*, registers his disbelief in a 1989 essay called “Was Rothko an Abstract Painter?”: “If we cannot actually see the artist’s metaphysical ‘subject’ in the physical object he has created for the avowed purpose of giving it expression, how can that subject be said to be present in the work?” Kramer then takes apart a Harvard art historian, Anna C. Chave, who sees metaphysical or religious subjects everywhere in Rothko. Chave has made her reputation by claiming certain Rothkos “parallel the pictorial structure” of a *pietà* or an entomb-

ment or a nativity or sometimes even all the above at once. Chave’s concern with content—a content she absurdly confects out of airy nothing—over self-evident form is symptomatic of a growing academic disenchantment with the abstractness of abstract art, Kramer finds, and some abstract artists’ own denials that their paintings are abstract have played into the hands of professorial nincompoops. These artists, Kramer speculates, feared being cut off from the great tradition of Western art, and invented meanings for their work that the work cannot reasonably sustain.

In his recent book *The Rape of the Masters*, Roger Kimball, Kramer’s editorial colleague at the *New Criterion*, recapitulates Kramer’s demolition of Chave and her breed—but then goes on to distinguish the purely aesthetic pleasures of abstract painting from the professions of religious significance in which artists and viewers alike have enfolded it. Affecting the sensible accents of logical positivism, Kimball declares that when he looks at a Rothko he sees painted rectangles of a certain size and a certain color, and that is all he sees. To discern a metaphysical subject in the work is to see what is not there. What is there ought to be quite enough. “A sensitive arrangement of simple colored forms can be beautiful. The apprehension of beauty affords pleasure, sometimes an intense pleasure, but a pleasure that is without motive, alibi, or ulterior interest—a pleasure, that is to say, which is complete in itself. The fact that such pleasures also belong to the activities of philosophical and religious contemplation has led many thinkers to draw an analogy between aesthetic and religious experience. How seriously we should take that analogy has been a matter of contention for millennia.”

Others see the matter differently. The poet John Ashbery insisted at the 1978 Rothko retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum: “The effect of these pictures is truly majestic and awe-inspiring, though the awe is of a secular and aesthetic kind. Or rather, one can feel, without sharing it, the religious experience that was color manifesting itself to the painter. And perhaps this is the way it should be. One does not have to be a Dominican to appreciate Fra Angelico or a Carmelite to understand St. Teresa.” In his eulogy for Rothko, Robert Motherwell pinpoints the revelatory strangeness of Rothko’s light and color as the core of his genius: “a color not of bright daylight illuminating strongly colored objects . . . but that instead of a luminescent glow from within. Not the light of the world.”

Rothko painted dozens of large canvases from 1949 to 1969 that are essentially masses of color, usually rectangles longer than they are tall, one placed above the other, sometimes a vertical rectangle above a

horizontal, more rarely a single block into which vertical panels are inserted; bands of a third color frame the rectangles. When color is what you concentrate on, fine gradations acquire great significance.

In an untitled painting from 1954 the topmost rectangle of pale gold hovers above a squat rectangle of lavender, here verging on gray, there on blue. A lemony band separates the two; a more saturated yellow frames them both, and the edges of this frame encroach upon the upper rectangle, so that the darker yellow shades into the lighter. Strips of red with feathery edges lie above and below the lavender rectangle. The lavender seems translucent, and the red appears to be seeping through it from underneath, although it also seems possible that the lavender is itself emerging from underneath to engulf the red, which may be fading as it recedes. Surface and depth interpenetrate, so that you cannot distinguish the color that is figure from the color that is ground. This is a characteristic ambiguity in Rothko: looking at becomes seeing into. These subtleties of color create a sense that you are peering into depths that are murky now but may not remain so.

Seeing into the depths is of course one of the most common metaphors for attaining knowledge, especially arcane metaphysical knowledge. Rothko's way of seeing indicates his mode of thinking: to regard the known world at its confluence with the unknown; to consider what the senses can show and what they cannot. Perhaps, then, Rothko's forms serve a religious vision prompted by a philosophical interrogation. As he said in 1948, "If painting is based upon the expression of thought rather than mere visual reactions, or sensations, then it can be simultaneous with philosophic thought, it can also be the source of the creation of philosophic decisions, it can be a philosophic expression."

Familiar color acquires an alien cast in Rothko. In *Violet, Black, Orange, Yellow on White and Red* (1949), the colors seem disembodied essences whose effrontery undermines the reality of what we know as the color of things like lemons and raspberries. *Orange and Yellow* (1956) has a dazzle at once celestial and earthly, as though this were the dynamo that powers the entire operation, employing both ethereal and bodily forces. The colors—of molten sunshine and fire that warms but doesn't burn—clearly have something to do with the known world even as they indicate an unknown, so that pure spirit for all its strangeness has a certain familiarity.

The singularity of the colors in such paintings as these is that they remind us of the objects we know well while they evoke a world normally out of reach.

What he offers is by no means the beatific vision, but rather the sublime: Paintings such as this demonstrate the pathos as well as the rapture of the sublime, which always affords a tantalizing glimpse of the ultimate mysteries but never quite discloses the longed-for truth. Still, Rothko's art might suggest how near to the beatific vision one might come with mortal eyes.

Rothko's art presents color as a matter for intent spiritual inquiry. Philosophizing in paint, Rothko asks what color is apart from the objects we see every day. From the opening verses of Genesis on, light and darkness are defining elements of the spiritual world as of the physical. In *Black and Maroon* (1959), lilac portals open into a darkness otherwise impenetrable, and the warm brightness of the way in suggests that the depths might just be hospitable. *Black on Black* (1964) is an emblem of negation so potent that life and light seem unthinkable, and then there are the several untitled works from 1969 that are the closest things Rothko did to landscapes, portraying the sterility of polar ice and arctic night. In the notoriously dark works that preceded his suicide, Rothko never quite gives up the struggle: He continues to seek the inward light, as though painting the glimpses he gets of the world within the world might be enough to sustain him against his mind's darkness.

When Rothko writes that the highest art is tragic, this human incapacity to sound reality to the bottom is one of the things he has in mind. He knows he has bored as deep as he can go, and his paintings are charged with the feeling that comes of reaching the limits of human knowledge: a mélange of rapture, perplexity, surrender, and longing that is never to be satisfied in this life. "The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And if you, as you say, are moved only by their color relationships, then you miss the point."

Barnett Newman (1905-1970) made claims for the spiritual significance of his work every bit as outsized as Rothko's. Prolific with the pen as with the paintbrush, Newman cranked out manifestos by the yard: proclaiming what art should be and then illustrating his declarations with the most fundamental shapes and colors on enormous canvases. In "The Plasmic Image," written in 1945, he abjures the dream world of surrealism and the emerging American cult of self-expression in paint. "The present painter is concerned not with his own feelings or with the mystery of his own personality but with the penetration into the world mystery. His imagination is therefore attempting to dig into metaphysical secrets. To that extent his art is concerned with the sublime. It is a religious art

which through symbols will catch the basic truth of life which is its sense of tragedy.”

Given this new jolt of metaphysical urgency, the painter will assume his rightful place of honor beside the philosopher and the pure scientist who belong to “the world of ideas, not the world of the senses.” These three vocations revere the truth as their common goal, which is to be attained as surely by artistic vision as by mathematical formulation or abstract speculation.

The best such vision, to Newman’s mind, partakes of mathematical formulation and abstract speculation along with tragic feeling. The new painter, Newman wrote, is “not concerned with geometric forms *per se* but in creating forms that by their abstract nature carry some abstract intellectual content.” At the time Newman was trying his hand at paintings that could be called vertical proto-Rothkos. The radically pared-down forms that Newman called his “zip” paintings were still three years away, but the direction was making itself clear. The writings of that time certainly make the line of thinking apparent and establish the artist’s unimpeachable intent; but whether the paintings make the thinking visible is a formidable question.

The *catalogue raisonné* of Newman’s work offers critical essays by Richard Shiff and Carol C. Mancusi-Ungaro. Although Mancusi-Ungaro tries to dislodge “the commonly held conception of Newman as an artist-thinker and artist-writer whose reputation for prose far exceeded his reputation for artistry,” Shiff’s much longer piece tends to reinforce the commonly held conception—unwittingly I think, for Shiff clearly takes Newman’s painting with the sort of seriousness only academic specialists can muster. Shiff attempts to elucidate the way Newman’s rich exiguousness in paint embodies the program set forth in the gnarled jargon of his prose. *Onement I* (1948), which Newman said changed his life, is a small oil painting of two vertical brown panels divided by a “zip,” a rather blurry orange-red line. *Onement I*, Shiff insists, “led the artist to the full realization of his new sense of ‘drawing.’ With this kind of drawing he was finally able to ‘fill the void’ or, as he preferred to say (especially during the 1960s), ‘declare a space.’ When Newman made or ‘drew’ his declaration, this was his metaphysical act. It created a space, rather than merely occupying existing space by ‘illustrating the void’ with ‘biomorphic forms.’ . . . Newman performed an act through which he created not only a physical space but also a ‘self’ that identified with it, a metaphysical self fully conscious only in the presence of this very space or mark, his ‘zip,’ his drawing.”

The frightening thing is that Shiff just might understand Newman as he hoped to be understood. Newman certainly had the learning and the force of mind to

be seen as serious, whatever he happened to paint, and he certainly conceived his paintings on an intellectually heroic scale. Zips were his central preoccupation from 1948 to 1970, and he turned out many dozens of them. Most were very large, as tall as eighteen feet. Newman painted with brushes at first, then moved on to a spray nozzle affixed to a soda-water atomizer; later, when he had more money, he used a professional spray gun with an air regulator and a hose. At first he favored oil paint, sometimes achieving delicate effects not unlike Rothko’s; but over time he began using an oil-acrylic mixture and eventually came to work mostly in pure acrylic, producing surfaces regular in value and almost flawless in polish. The Rothko-like brushwork that evokes metaphysical depth in such paintings as *Dionysius* and *Cathedral* became a distraction from Newman’s primary focus: the massing of walls of color and the glorification of his own intellectual subtlety in the variegated articulations of his signature zips.

Some representative titles of zip paintings indicate his ambition: *Achilles*, *Ulysses*, *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, *Adam*, *Eve*, *Abraham*, *Joshua*, *Uriel*, *Primordial Light*, *The Stations of the Cross* (a series of fourteen paintings). Thomas B. Hess’ 1971 monograph on Newman, which Shiff calls “essentially a collaboration between artist and critic,” details Newman’s immersion in Jewish mystical literature and his working out an arcane religious program in paint. Preparatory to the actual painting, Newman would deploy columns of numbers to plot the proportions of his works; the position of the zips would sometimes depend on calculations informed by the numerological value of key Hebrew words.

But do the paintings live up to the vehement talk and elaborate program? In *Eve* (1950) a vast ochre field of almost uniform value has a zip on the right edge, indicating the encroachment of forbidden knowledge and original sin, perhaps. *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* (1950) is bigger and has a little more red and five zips, but still ends up looking an awful lot like *Eve*; the proportions of the color masses divided by the zips are not quite Palladian, suggesting an imperfection even in the sublime hero, one supposes. This is not most people’s idea of deep thinking or luminous spirituality.

The first of his *Stations of the Cross* has a white field suffused with gold, a funerary black band at the left edge, a white zip toward the right edge with smudged black around it; the fourth has an off-white field, a very thin white zip toward the right encased in a column of black, and near the funerary band on the left some needle-like spatters of black; the fourteenth station, also called *Entombment*, is a field of virgin snow with a pale gray band on the right edge and a darker gray band on

the left. Newman wrote in his statement appended to the exhibit of the *Stations* at the Guggenheim Museum, "The first pilgrims walked the Via Dolorosa to identify themselves with the original moment, not to reduce it to a pious legend; nor even to worship the story of one man and his agony, but to stand witness to the story of each man's agony; the agony that is single, constant, unrelenting, willed—world without end."

For all its hectic irreverence, which goes beyond conventional Jewish disbelief in the divinity of Christ, the written statement is far more eloquent than the paintings. In nearly all Newman's work, the disproportion between brainy conception and sensuous achievement is glaring. The paintings' titles have a venerable sonority, but the works are rendered in the voice of someone sucking helium: The louder it gets, the sillier it sounds.

**W**illem de Kooning (1904-1997) wanted no part of any supreme intellectual directive. In the 1940s the surrealist vogue for myth, primitivism, and the unconscious enthralled Rothko and Newman as well as Pollock and Gottlieb. De Kooning for his part was not about to chain himself to any fashionable idea. As Mark Stevens and Annalyn Swan write in *De Kooning: An American Master*, "He loved the physical world too much for this kind of sky-writing."

Painting forms prescribed by high-flown palaver held no appeal. In 1959 de Kooning disparaged the flagrant absence of the known world in such abstractionist sects as Suprematism and Purism. What excited him was earth and living flesh; he would give them more vitality than they knew they had. He was the most gifted draftsman of the Abstract Expressionists and, with Rothko, the most vibrant colorist. Drilled in representational precision in his native Holland, de Kooning worked as a commercial artist when he came to New York, and the springing freedom of his line that this discipline earned was the envy of his contemporaries. A spiritual life very much of this earth was what he was after, and he possessed the artistic means of achieving it.

De Kooning's most famous paintings are his several "Women" he painted in the 1950s, icons of a ghastly fleshliness that, as Stevens and Swan point out, both recall the beauties of the great tradition from Rubens to Picasso and evoke the sirens of Hollywood and cigarette advertisements. The torso of *Woman I* (1950-52) is a monumental block, almost square, like some Mayan figure. Her breasts look like bubble headlights and account for about a third of her body weight. Her head is a skull with rodent teeth and insect eyes. Her body above the waist is rendered in creamy white with

ashen smears; the effect is of irreparably soiled purity. She is wearing a skirt whose colors suggest a festive putrescence, and her formidable hips and thighs are poised like a bear-trap. *Woman and Bicycle* (1952-53) is every bit as lusty, frightening, and comic. She smiles twice, madly: The second set of choppers appears on her neck, as though prepared literally to disarm anyone fool enough to try to stroke her breasts. The breasts are absurdly pink, like bubble gum. De Kooning depicts the grotesque conjunction of crass commercial Americana and animal sexuality, mass-produced and desired by all. The paintings are blatantly irreverent, offensive to the pious of all stripes, ordinary Christians and high priests of artistic modernism alike.

Stevens and Swan never come out and say so, but the story they tell of de Kooning's sexual bohemianism—the marriage to a painter and critic as recklessly promiscuous as himself, the betrayals of the women with whom he was betraying his wife, the casual abortions, the widespread psychic damage—reveals that these monsters in the paintings were drawn from life. The creatures who chew up the males of the species and spit them out are the ones a man like de Kooning has fashioned in his own image; they are his soul-mates. Such moralizing is foreign to Stevens and Swan's sensibilities; they permit the non-judgmental reader to think of their man as lusty and freewheeling rather than vicious and degraded. But their account of the emotional carnage—in the end he and his first wife, Elaine, were ravaged by alcoholism, for neither could endure the life they both had made—points its own moral.

**I**n fact de Kooning did some moralizing of his own, in his finest painting, *Excavation* (1950). This is a finely ordered rendition of whirling chaos. Fragments of bodies, rarely distinct but somehow identifiably human, wheel around the center like specks of ash around a pyre; rhythmic diagonals mark the upward surge and the terrible descent. These are bodies torn and bizarrely reconstituted according to some dire theology whose foremost principles are pain and insult. Macerating jaws or even teeth without jaws rend the meat as it flies by. Smears of blood register the devastation. Perhaps this is what bodies are when they have been transformed into suffering souls. In some places flesh has turned into something transparent and almost ethereal—one can look through certain figures drawn in outline to see the ground—yet this substance clearly remains susceptible to physical torment. Forms are reduced to the pained and painful essentials, like the human stump disintegrating into a cloud of blood to the lower left of center or the gaping fish-maw in the lower right corner. It is hard to distinguish that which is broken from that which is doing the breaking.

This is de Kooning's excavation of one of the infernal circles, which he knows like his own studio, his own bedroom. In this grim meeting-ground of matter and spirit, matter learns the folly of supposing it alone is real. *Excavation* is the masterpiece of Abstract Expressionism—and a tragic masterpiece: The man who wanted all the pleasure the earth can afford, so that the artist might express the joy he took in the physical world, understood in this painting of penitential suffering that one cannot love this world alone and hope to be a whole man. De Kooning never applied this knowledge, which might have saved him from self-destruction, to his own life, and he only painted it exactly right once. He would go on painting with earthy fervor and living with ruinous profligacy.

Rothko sought the border where the visible world shades into the invisible, but at the height of his achieve-

ment and renown, he would take an overdose of barbiturates and slash the arteries in his forearms. Newman tried to embody and overcome human tragedy with zips and solid blocks of color arrayed in accordance with a hermetic code. For twenty years he would repeat grand stylized gestures of thunderous triviality. De Kooning and Rothko painted some great pictures, but at their best they saw their lives as tragic, and their understanding never gave them the strength to sustain creative force or moral clarity or even simple vitality.

However exalted their conception of their calling, however remarkable their achievements, even the best of the Abstract Expressionists failed to penetrate the mystery of what is required of people if they are to live well on this earth. Color and mass and line were what these painters knew of salvation, and what they knew was not enough. [FT]

## Diptych

1. On the dead features of  
The toppled Mafia chieftain,  
Cameras record a smile  
Of martyred resignation  
To the nine slugs that stopped  
His late spaghetti dinner.  
Perhaps he was amused  
With bullets fired after  
The first two scored mid chest,  
Or scorned those in his guts  
And thrown extremities  
Like little paper cuts.

His game was tough-guy tag  
And he's it now, in spades.  
Forget the cash diverted,  
The pimp and capo legs  
Once crisply ordered broken,  
The stubborn mouths and noses  
Set up to bloom point blank  
Like stricken scarlet roses;  
Forget that one good friend  
He tagged himself while winning  
Some enforcer's favor,  
Near the game's beginning.

2. If gazed at long enough  
The statue of young Saint  
Sebastian seems to smile  
Beneath its lurid paint,  
  
A trick of candle glow  
Intensified by hope  
That cameras can't record.  
Thus faith transcends the rope  
And arrow shafts that fix  
Sebastian to his tree  
And makes of wretched death  
This wretched irony:

Beyond the galling of  
A fierce gangland canard.  
Our mobster may have sensed  
Immortal forms at large;  
He may have been redeemed  
As life force was expelled  
From its familiar round,  
Its mortal housing felled;  
He may, believers say,  
Because his final looks  
Suggest death is the same  
For saints and tabloid crooks.

*William Conelly*

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# The Designs of Science

*Christoph Cardinal Schönborn*

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In July 2005 the *New York Times* published my short essay "Finding Design in Nature." The reaction has been overwhelming, and not overwhelmingly positive. In the October issue of *FIRST THINGS*, Stephen Barr honored me with a serious response, one fairly representative of the reaction of many Catholics.

I fear, however, that Barr has misunderstood my argument and possibly misconceived the issue of whether the human intellect can discern the reality of design in the world of living things.

It appears from Barr's essay—and a number of other responses—that my argument was substantially misunderstood. In "Finding Design in Nature," I said:

- The Church "proclaims that by the light of reason the human intellect can readily and clearly discern purpose and design in the natural world, including the world of living things."

- "Any system of thought that denies or seeks to explain away the overwhelming evidence for design in biology is ideology, not science."

- Quoting our late Holy Father John Paul II: "The evolution of living beings, of which science seeks to determine the stages and to discern the mechanism, presents an internal finality which arouses admiration. This finality, which directs beings in a direction for which they are not responsible or in charge, obliges one to suppose a Mind which is its inventor, its creator."

- Again quoting John Paul II: "To all these indications of the existence of God the Creator, some oppose the power of chance or of the proper mechanisms of matter. To speak of chance for a universe which presents such a complex organization in its ele-

ments and such marvelous finality in its life would be equivalent to giving up the search for an explanation of the world as it appears to us. In fact, this would be equivalent to admitting effects without a cause. It would be to abdicate human intelligence, which would thus refuse to think and to seek a solution for its problems."

- Quoting the *Catechism*: "Human intelligence is surely already capable of finding a response to the question of origins. The existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason. . . . We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom. It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance."

- Referring to the Church's teaching on the importance and reach of metaphysics: "But in the modern era, the Catholic Church is in the odd position of standing in firm defense of reason as well. In the nineteenth century, the First Vatican Council taught a world newly enthralled by the 'death of God' that by the use of reason alone mankind could come to know the reality of the Uncaused Cause, the First Mover, the God of the philosophers."

My argument was based neither on theology nor modern science nor "intelligent design theory." In theology, although the mind's ability to grasp the order and design in nature is adopted by, taken up into, and elevated to new heights by the faith of Christianity, that ability precedes faith, as Romans 1:19-20 makes clear. In science, the discipline and methods are such that design—more precisely, formal and final causes in natural beings—is purposefully excluded from its reductionist conception of nature.

Instead, my argument was based on the natural ability of the human intellect to grasp the intelligible realities that populate the natural world, including

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most clearly and evidently the world of living substances, living beings. Nothing is intelligible—nothing can be grasped in its essence by our intellects—without first being ordered by a creative intellect. The possibility of modern science is fundamentally grounded on the reality of an underlying creative intellect that makes the natural world what it is. The natural world is nothing less than a mediation between minds: the unlimited mind of the Creator and our limited human minds. *Res ergo naturalis inter duos intellectus constituta*—“The natural thing is constituted between two intellects,” in the words of St. Thomas. In short, my argument was based on careful examination of the evidence of everyday experience; in other words, on philosophy.

Many readers will no doubt be disappointed. It seemed that, right or wrong, my original essay was all about *science*, about real, tangible, factual knowledge of the material world. But now I admit to be speaking in the language of natural philosophy, that old-fashioned way of understanding reality which quickly faded into the intellectual shadows after the arrival of the new knowledge of Galileo and Newton. Philosophy continues, it is said, only as a meta-narrative for modern science and contains no positive knowledge of its own. In short, I seem to have admitted that my essay was a meaningless or at best subjective form of argument from a discarded and discredited discipline.

It is my sincere hope that for readers of *FIRST THINGS* I need not respond to this modern caricature of philosophy. Philosophy is the “science of common experience” which provides our most fundamental and most certain grasp on reality. And, clearly, it is philosophical knowledge of reality that is most in need of defense in our time.

Today, spirit-matter dualism dominates Christian thinking about reality. By “spirit-matter dualism” I mean the habit of thought in which physical reality is conceived of according to the reductive claims of modern science (which is to say, positivism), combined in a mysterious way with a belief in the immaterial realities of the human and divine spirits as known only by faith (which is to say, fideism).

But human reason is much more than just positivistic “scientific” knowledge. Indeed, true science is impossible unless we first grasp the reality of natures and essences, the intelligible principles of the natural world. We can with much profit study nature using the tools and techniques of modern science. But let us never forget, as some modern scientists have forgotten, that the study of reality via reductive methods leads to incomplete knowledge. To grasp reality as it is, we must return to our pre-scientific and post-scientific knowledge, the tacit knowledge that pervades sci-

ence, the knowledge that, when critically examined and refined, we call philosophy.

Stephen Barr criticizes me for confusing two very different things: the modest scientific theory of neo-Darwinism (which he defines as “the idea that the mainspring of evolution is natural selection acting on random genetic variation”) and what he calls the “theological” claim that evolution is an “unguided, unplanned” process. “This,” he asserts, “is the central misstep of Cardinal Schönborn’s article.”

Let us assume for the moment that I indeed made a mistake. Is there any excuse, any basis for my error? Barr, treating Darwinism with great delicacy, says nothing. But there is much he could have said. He could have listed quotations from Darwinian scientists going on dozens of pages in which they make such “theological” assertions, in bold and completely unqualified ways, assertions that evolution by means of random variation and natural selection is an unguided, unplanned process.

Many of those assertions are in textbooks and scientific journals, not just in popular writings. I will leave it to others to compile a complete account of such quotations. I made a small contribution of three quotations in my recent catechesis on creation and evolution in the cathedral church of St. Stephen’s in Vienna. Here is one of those three examples, a quotation from the American scientist Will Provine: “Modern science directly implies that the world is organized strictly in accordance with deterministic principles or chance. There are no purposive principles whatsoever in nature. There are no gods and no designing forces rationally detectable.”

Barr argues that such “theological” claims are separable from a more modest *science* of neo-Darwinism. I agree that there is a difference between a modest science of Darwinism and the broader metaphysical claims frequently made on its behalf. But which of those two is more properly called “neo-Darwinism” in an unqualified way, as I did in my essay?

For now, I happily concede that a metaphysically modest version of neo-Darwinism could potentially be compatible with the philosophical truth (and thus Catholic teaching) about nature. If the Darwinist, taking up Descartes’ and Bacon’s project of understanding nature according only to material and efficient causes, studies the history of living things and says that he can see no organizing, active principles of whole living substances (formal causes) and no real plan, purpose or design in living things (final causes), then I accept his report without surprise. It is obviously compatible with the full truth that the world of living beings is replete with formality and finality. It comes

as no surprise that reductionist science cannot recognize those very aspects of reality that it excludes—or at least, seeks to exclude—by its choice of method.

But how successful is modern biology, seeking to be true to its founding principles, at excluding the rational consideration of final cause? One way to grasp this problem is to examine the question of “randomness” and the role it plays in modern evolutionary biology.

The notion of “randomness” is obviously of great importance. The technical error at the heart of my analysis of neo-Darwinism, says Barr, is my misunderstanding of how the term “random” as used by Darwinian biology. “If the word ‘random’ necessarily entails the idea that some events are ‘unguided’ in the sense of falling ‘outside the bounds of divine providence,’ we should have to condemn as incompatible with Christian faith a great deal of modern physics, chemistry, geology, and astronomy, as well as biology,” he wrote.

This is absurd, of course. The word “random” as used in science does not mean uncaused, unplanned, or inexplicable; it means *uncorrelated*. My children like to observe the license plates of the cars that pass us on the highway, to see which states they are from. The sequence of states exhibits a degree of randomness: a car from Kentucky, then New Jersey, then Florida, and so on—because the cars are uncorrelated: knowing where one car comes from tells us nothing about where the next one comes from. And yet, each car comes to that place at that time for a reason. Each trip is *planned*, each *guided* by some map and some schedule.

I certainly agree with much of what Barr says, and I appreciate his delightful example. I would like to suggest, however, that he may be overlooking something when it comes to modern biology. First of all, we must observe that the role of randomness in Darwinian biology is quite different from its role in thermodynamics, quantum theory, and other natural sciences. In those sciences randomness captures our inability to predict or know the precise behavior of the parts of a system (or perhaps, in the case of the quantum world, some intrinsic properties of the system). But in all such cases the “random” behavior of parts is embedded in and constrained by a deeply mathematical and precise conceptual structure of the whole that makes the overall behavior of the system orderly and intelligible.

The randomness of neo-Darwinian biology is nothing like that. It is simply random. The variation through genetic mutation is random. And natural

selection is also random: The properties of the ever-changing environment that drive evolution through natural selection are *also* not correlated to anything, according to the Darwinists. Yet out of all that unconstrained, unintelligible mess emerges, *deus ex machina*, the precisely ordered and extraordinarily intelligible world of living organisms. And this is the heart of the neo-Darwinian science of biology.

Be that as it may, let us return to and extend Barr’s license plate example and see what we might learn. Suppose the Barr family sets out on a trip southward from their home in Delaware—and, while hearing a brief introductory lecture on the proper meaning of randomness, the children start writing down the state of each passing license plate. After hours have passed, the children, pausing at their work, provide the following report: While each individual car’s license plate does indeed seem uncorrelated to the previous and next, or to anything in the immediate environment, there may nevertheless be a pattern in the data. At first, almost all the license plates were from Delaware. A little later the majority shifted to Maryland. A few hours after that there was a big upswing of District of Columbia plates, mixing in near-equal proportion to the Maryland plates. A short time later the majority became Virginia plates. Now they see a dramatic shift to North Carolina plates. Is there a pattern here? Is there a reason one can think of for that pattern?

**T**he Darwinian biologist looking at the history of life faces a precisely analogous question. If he takes a very narrow view of the supposedly random variation that meets his gaze, it may well be impossible to correlate it to anything interesting, and thus variation remains simply unintelligible. He then summarizes his ignorance of any pattern in variation by means of the rather respectable term “random.” But if he steps back and looks at the sweep of life, he sees an obvious, indeed an overwhelming pattern. The variation that actually occurred in the history of life was exactly the sort needed to bring about the *complete set of plants and animals that exist today*. In particular, it was exactly the variation needed to give rise to an upward sweep of evolution resulting in human beings. If that is not a powerful and relevant correlation, then I don’t know what could count as evidence against actual randomness in the mind of an observer.

Some may object: This is a pure tautology, not scientific knowledge. I have assumed the conclusion, “rigged the game,” and so forth. But that is not true. I have simply related two indisputable facts: Evolution happened (or so we will presume, for purposes of this analysis), and our present biosphere is the result. The two sets of facts correlate perfectly. Facts are not tau-

tologies simply because they are indisputably *true*. If the modern biologist chooses to ignore this indubitable correlation, I have no objection. He is free to define his special science on terms as narrow as he finds useful for gaining a certain kind of knowledge. But he may not then turn around and demand that the rest of us, unrestricted by his methodological self-limitation, ignore obvious truths about reality, such as the clearly teleological nature of evolution.

Let us return to a telling word of Barr. He refers to my allegedly over-broad understanding of neo-Darwinism as unwarranted extension of the theory into the realm of “theology.” Does his use of that term mean that we can only know that teleology is real in the world of living beings by reference to revealed truth? Does it mean that unaided human reason cannot grasp the evident order, purpose, and intelligence manifested so clearly in the world of living beings? Does it mean that we worship an unjust God who, as Romans 1:19-20 teaches, punishes people for their failure to abide by natural law, a law St. Paul says they cannot fail to recognize through the manifest order in the nature world?

Barr’s essay addresses at some length the question of design in biology, but does not clearly affirm that reason can grasp the reality of design *without the aid of faith*. If my reading is correct (and I hope I am wrong), in that respect Barr has followed the overwhelming trend of Catholic commentators on the question of neo-Darwinian evolution, who gladly discuss its compatibility with the truths of *faith* but seldom bother to discuss whether and how it is compatible with the truths of *reason*.

Perhaps now that the role of fideism is in view, I can profitably return to the question of the essential meaning of the term “neo-Darwinism.” If, as many seem to think, neo-Darwinism serves as a valid “design-defeating hypothesis” at the level of human reason but is rescued from any ultimately improper conclusions only by the intervention of *theology*, then it seems that my expansive definition is fully vindicated. If reason is incapable of grasping real teleology in living things and their history, then neo-Darwinism—which obviously is incapable of taking into account theological truths—can truly be said to be a theory that asserts, in the words of my original essay, that evolution is “an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection.” What so many Catholics seem to be saying is that, so far as we can determine with our unaided human intellects, according to even the “metaphysically modest” version of neo-Darwinism, there is no real plan, purpose, or design in living things, and absolutely no directional-

ty to evolution; yet we know those things to be true *by faith*. In other words, a “metaphysically modest” neo-Darwinism is not so modest after all. It means a Darwinism that does not conflict with knowledge about reality known through faith alone. In the debate about design in nature, *sola fides* takes on an entirely new meaning.

Modern science alone may well be incapable of grasping the key truths about nature that are woven into the fabric of Catholic theology and morality. And theology proper does not supply these key truths either. Prior to both science and theology is philosophy, the “science of common experience.” Its role in these crucial matters is indispensable.

Let us return to the heart of the problem: positivism. Modern science first excludes *a priori* final and formal causes, then investigates nature under the reductive mode of mechanism (efficient and material causes), and then turns around to claim both final and formal causes are obviously unreal, and also that its mode of knowing the corporeal world takes priority over all other forms of human knowledge. Being mechanistic, modern science is also historicist: It argues that a complete description of the efficient and material causal history of an entity is a complete explanation of the entity itself—in other words, that an understanding of how something *came to be* is the same as understanding *what it is*. But Catholic thinking rejects the genetic fallacy applied to the natural world and contains instead a holistic understanding of reality based on all the faculties of reason and *all* the causes evident in nature—including the “vertical” causation of formality and finality.

Some may object that my original small essay in the *New York Times* was misleading because it was too easily misunderstood as an argument about the details of science. As a matter of fact, I expected some initial misunderstanding. Even had it been possible to state in a thousand words a highly qualified and nuanced statement about the relations among modern science, philosophy, and theology, the essay would likely have been dismissed as “mere philosophy,” with no standing to challenge the hegemony of scientism. It was crucially important to communicate a claim about design in nature that was in no way inferior to a “scientific” (in the modern sense) argument. Indeed, my argument was superior to a “scientific” argument since it was based on more certain and enduring truths and principles.

The modern world needs badly to hear this message. What frequently passes for modern science—with its heavy accretion of materialism and positivism—is simply wrong about nature in fundamental

ways. Modern science is often, in the words of my essay, "ideology, not science." The problems caused by positivism are especially acute in the broad anti-teleological implications drawn from Darwin's theory of evolution, which has become (in the phrase of Pope Benedict XVI, writing some years ago) the new "first philosophy" of the modern world, a total and foundational description of reality that goes far beyond a

proper grounding in the descriptive and reductive science on which it is based. My essay was designed to awaken Catholics from their dogmatic slumber about positivism in general and evolutionism in particular. It appears to have worked. FT

*(In next month's issue of FIRST THINGS, Stephen Barr returns with a general essay on Intelligent Design.)*

## Poem in Mid-Winter

Today is thirty-eight degrees,  
Too cold to swim, too warm to freeze.  
It's not a Sunday, not a snow day.  
Just a Wonder Bread John Doe day.  
Mother Nature must have slipped  
To make a day so nondescript  
That if today had robbed a bank  
The Wanted posters would be blank.

Fred Fisher's cows, who know no rush,  
Whose job is chewing hay to mush,  
Morosely arch their bovine brows  
At one more day of being cows.  
The ocean spreads a foamy hand  
Consoling across the sand  
To reassure the ageless bride  
He wakened one more day beside.

A wedding held this afternoon  
Deserves some extra honeymoon.  
The babies born will not be kings  
But scallopers, and humbler things.  
Today no wars will be begun,  
No major lawsuits filed or won;  
A Chilmark woman may, instead,  
Decide to bake banana bread.

At dusk, morticians tiptoe in  
To tag this day: No next of kin;  
A day discarded, used and tossed,  
A scratch-and-win piece, scratched and lost.  
By sundown this is all one sees,  
Though poets past were known to squeeze  
A masterpiece from days like these.  
Tonight is thirty-eight degrees.

*Daniel Waters*

# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## Imagining Narnia

THE NARNIAN: THE LIFE AND  
IMAGINATION OF C.S. LEWIS  
by ALAN JACOBS  
*HarperSanFrancisco, 368 pages,  
\$25.95*

Reviewed by Dermot Quinn

C.S. LEWIS IS HARD to like and easy to love. As a solitary, clever, and bookish child he was a study in precocity, a model prig. "I have a prejudice against the French," he announced, a four year old, to his father. Why? "If I knew why it wouldn't be a prejudice." At the age of nine he was read-

ing *Paradise Lost* and (he told his diary) making "reflections there-on." At the age of fourteen, he had written an entire novel. As a schoolboy classicist, brightest of his peers, he graded ancient authors as if competitors with him for academic prizes: Thucydides "desperately dull and tedious," Plato and Horace "charming," Homer a "giant."

Many adolescents speak like this but with Lewis it was no bluff. His self-belief, his assurance of superiority, was utterly serene. Reading more, thinking more, remembering more than his contemporaries, he was formidable in debate, a person to admire at a distance but avoid in the deeper

intimacies of life. A childhood of "long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences and . . . endless books" prepared him to take on the world and to win. He was happiest when, Johnson-like, he argued for victory.

Many of those quarrels, alas, were with his father, an eccentric and troubled man but one whose love for a brilliant son was returned with ill-concealed irritation, occasionally with contempt. With his mother

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dying when he was nine, Lewis sought refuge in a library, not in the companionship of a man like himself obviously needy, lonely, and ready for love. Years of frustration and petulance followed, reconciliation coming only at the end. Throughout his life, Lewis addressed his letters to a "dear Papy" and signed off as a "loving son"—one of his less believ-

able fictions. It is hard to warm to such a person.

For all that, Lewis is still beloved as an author, apologist, and advocate. He was one of the most successful and improbable public Christians of the twentieth century, a beery Billy Graham, a televangelist in tweeds. Known to millions and admired to the point of adoration by many of

them, he turned somehow from being an academic terror into favorite uncle: warm, friendly, benign, wise. There is even a hint of idolatry about the cult of admiration for C.S. Lewis that began forming even during his life, with its shrines, sacred texts, keepers of the flame, and theological niceties. The result is paradoxical. C.S. Lewis has become "C.S. Lewis"—a brand mark, a type, a multi-million-dollar business. His intensely private world has become public property. His thoughts have become everyone's thoughts. *Mere Christianity* has become *More Christianity*. The *Logos* has become a series of logos.

To his credit, Lewis was unsettled by this. For one thing, he understood the spiritual dangers of vanity. For another, it was time-consuming to be a guru. Most important, he knew that winning an argument could be as dangerous as losing one. "No doctrine is dimmer to the eye of faith," he once wrote, "than that which a man has just *successfully* defended." He was speaking about his own faith. "For a moment, you see, it has seemed to rest upon oneself: as a result, when you go away, it seems no stronger than that weak pillar." To wake in the stretches of the night and think of a public eager for the latest book or broadcast was his own peculiar cross.

It was not easy for C.S. Lewis to be "C.S. Lewis." What if his arguments were wrong? (On one famous occasion he was bested by G.E.M. Anscombe, who pointed out an apparent logical fallacy in his theodicy.) What if they were too clever by half? What if they were self-serving? What if victory in the eyes of the world meant defeat in the eyes of God? The scrupulous possibilities were endless, a thicket of self-examination. Apologists, he concluded, can be saved "only by falling back continually from the web of our own arguments... into the Reality—from Christian apologetics into Christ

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himself." That was a satisfactorily Calvinist formulation—a good argument about the dangers of good arguments. It also had the value of being true.

As Alan Jacobs points out in his new work on Lewis, *The Narnian*, the man before his conversion was "neither a particularly likable nor a particularly interesting person." Once he "admitted that God was God," and that Christ was the true revelation of that God to Man, "the key to his own hidden and locked-away personality was given to him. . . . What appears almost immediately is a kind of gusto (sheer bold enthusiasm for what he loves) that is characteristic of him ever after."

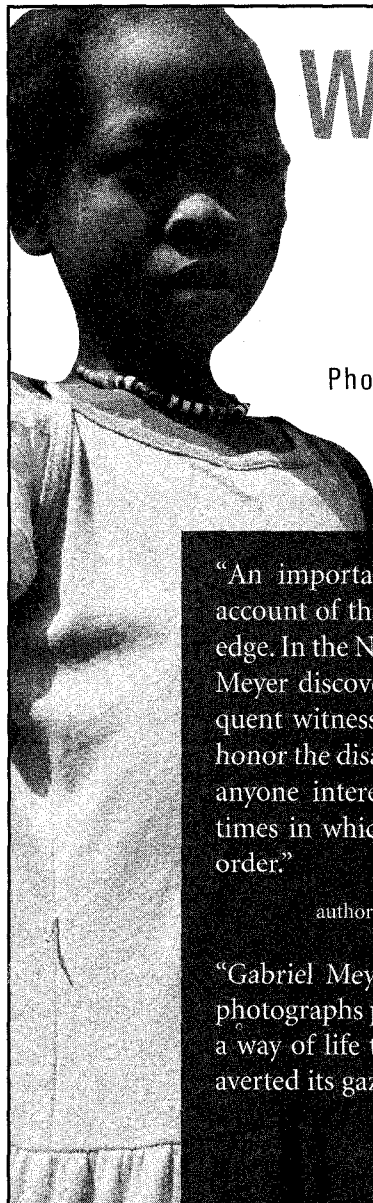
Conversion stories demand such dichotomies and, trained to question their schematic simplicity, their suspicious neatness, we doubt if they tell the whole truth. Still, Jacobs makes a more-than-plausible case for the profundity of the change. Suddenly, joy entered Lewis' life. Suddenly he experienced, almost for the first time, an appetite and capacity for enchantment. Suddenly he knew, almost as a private pleasure, that the world made by a loving Father and redeemed by a self-giving Son was a world to be embraced, enjoyed, and loved.

Suddenly, you might say, he discovered the sacramental imagination. The child Lewis—an Ulster Protestant with the usual hostility towards papists—would have been amazed at the adult Lewis' thoroughly Catholic theology of pleasure: "There is no good in trying to be more spiritual than God. God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why he uses material things like bread and wine to put new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not: He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it."

Enchantment is the theme, then, and Jacobs more or less pulls it off. His book is about Lewis the Narnian—the man who entered another

world and discovered, as if in a vision, that it is our own. The rest of his life was spent as a traveler returning from that land, encouraging us to see it for ourselves: encouraging us, in other words, to see what is all around us. The adventure of Christianity is available to everyone. Moments of joy—lives of joy—can be had by all. The gospel is *good news*.

That is why the child who read Milton became the man who wanted to read fairy stories. Those stories reveal truths that other tales only report—that darkness is real, but so, too, light; that death will come but that life will triumph; that the universe has moral structure and that we are part of it. G.K. Chesterton loved fairy stories for the same reason. He



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wrote in *Orthodoxy* of the Ethics of Elfland, rightly seeing them as the ethics of everyman. For both Chesterton and Lewis, enchantment was not whimsy or sentimental optimism, willful escapism or hoping for the best. It was a glimpse, sometimes all too fleeting, of how things really are. Lewis never ceased to be grateful for it.

Of course there are false enchantments—the will to power, the lure of lust. Evil spells exist as well as good ones. That is the Christian challenge—to tell the difference between one and the other, to embrace the world while avoiding its wiles. Lewis managed to do so even as the insistent world pressed in upon him—the invitations to speak, the flattering applause, the evidence, all around him, that he had become a Great Man. It was an achievement greater than any of his books. Vanity, vanity, all is vanity, says the preacher, slyly

looking into the mirror. Lewis knew the danger of smiling at his own reflection. *The Narnian*, Alan Jacobs assures us, is not a conventional biography. Jacobs seeks instead the “more elusive quarry” of the “formation and expression of one of the most intriguing minds of the twentieth century.” But the book is, in fact, a conventional enough life and quite well done. It has its faults. Research rapture shines from almost every page, an enchantment with the irrelevant.

If you want to know that visitors to Oxford can now “purchase a lovely little facsimile edition of [Shelley’s] ‘Necessity of Atheism’ at the Bodleian Library Shop,” this is the book for you. Still, *The Narnian*’s vices are easily outweighed by its virtues: enthusiasm, intelligence, thoughtful exegesis, moral decency. C.S. Lewis’ fans will like it, and perhaps even some who are not.

## Judging Politics

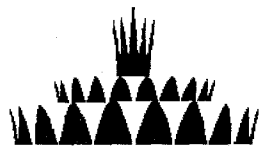
THE WAYS OF JUDGMENT  
by OLIVER O'DONOVAN  
W.B. Eerdmans, 330 pages, \$35

Reviewed by Gilbert Meilaender

ONCE THERE WAS no politics in the “pre-political” society God created. One day there will be no politics, in the society gathered around the throne of the Lamb. But, for now, political society exists as “a moment in parentheses,” and its structure is trinitarian in character. It exists by God’s ordinance to exercise judgment about what we have done and what we ought to do (a judgment to which, because it is authorized by God, the Church rightly defers); it exercises that judgment through institutions—structures whose representative character can be fully understood only when grounded in “the relation of redeemed humanity to Christ, the representative of all humanity in his death and glorification”; and its God-ordained task of judgment always stands over against and is limited by Jesus’ “counter-political” command that we “judge not,” a command embodied in the Spirit-filled communications of the Church’s life.

Though lacking, of course, the illuminating discussion that fills in the details, this is the basic structure of the political ethics developed by Oliver O’Donovan in *The Ways of Judgment*. It is hinted at even in the poem, “Buckle Street,” which serves as the book’s epigraph. The poem pictures a stream *Unnaturally suspended above the banks / Of ancient plunging woodlands*, a stream that now waters *genial upland pastures*. So also, Rome’s rulers and warriors made their way down to the plains, bringing with them *the ways of judg-*

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ment that nourish social life. But that social life can become a life beyond the ways of (human) judgment only by virtue of a greater rule and nourishment:

*So Grace, the invader, scornful of gravity,  
Follows the traces left by our interdicts,  
Scoops out from the hard-core legal strictures  
Runnels of kindly communication.*

In *The Desire of the Nations*, his work on political theology published a decade ago, O'Donovan had promised a second book in which analysis of political concepts would come to the fore. Though he now draws back somewhat from any overly sharp distinction between political theology and political ethics—and though he aggressively begins not with political assumptions but with Christian faith—he nevertheless explores here in detail the central concepts that shape our understanding of political society.

He does this in part because faith always seeks understanding and, in this instance, an understanding that can guide believing Christians as they exercise their political responsibilities. Beyond that, however, he does it in response to a “crisis of confidence” permeating our culture. We have political beliefs and institutions, to which we remain committed even when we have set aside the underlying metaphysic and faith that shaped them, but whose intelligibility we no longer can explain. “Christian theology in these circumstances resumes its ancient role of educating a people in the practical reasonableness required for their political tasks.”

The exercise of political authority once involved more than the act of judgment alone. After the resurrection of Christ, however, our rulers, necessary though they are, should neither suppose that they are sovereign nor imagine that they can ade-

quately represent the identity of the community and its tradition. The task of government is now strictly preparatory: It orders life toward, may in some measure be shaped by, but cannot adequately represent the universal society to which the risen Lord summons us. Thus, O'Donovan depicts a limited and anti-totalitarian (though not necessarily minimal) state—able and charged to right wrongs, but incapable of developing any comprehensive picture of what a good society would be, since social harmony is “a nexus of social communications that exist and flourish antecedently” and not “a design conceived in a ruler's head.” If we want more than this, if we want some “concrete, positive image of renewed life,” we should seek it not from political rule but in “the social life of the church.”

The seven chapters of the first part of *The Ways of Judgment*, treating

the (limited but essential and God-ordained) act of political judgment, are extraordinarily rich, and I cannot do justice to them here. I will content myself with brief comments on two of his most important discussions: on the concepts of equality and of punishment.

Committed though we are to a belief in human equality, such equality will hardly strike us as obvious if we simply open our eyes and look around. Rather, our belief in human equality must be “grounded in a truth that is to be told about humankind's relations to that which is not humankind, and the only relation which answers the point is that in which each human being stands to the creator.”

Despite, that is, our very different capacities, each of us is equidistant from Eternity. To the degree, therefore, that our culture increasingly thinks of itself as secular, and thinks



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of human beings apart from any relation to the Creator, we have a fundamental commitment without any narrative to make sense of it. We may need Christian theology to “display the intelligibility” of a commitment we take for granted—lest the day come soon enough when,

unable to make sense of it, we abandon it.

At the same time, we need not suppose that our belief in human equality has any simple translation into social policy or requires that those who are equal be treated identically. We should eliminate from our

shared life not all differences but only those that are a genuine affront to our God-given equality. O'Donovan suggests that there are three moments, in particular, when the act of political judgment must respect equality absolutely: (1) Those who, because made by and for God, transcend every earthly society, must be treated equally before the law. (2) When life and death themselves are at stake—with respect to our coming into and our going out of being—our equality must be honored. And (3) no human being may be deprived of the resources necessary to participate in society. These last two, in particular, “form an eschatological framework of equality, within the bounds of which social differentiations can safely be developed.” As “metaphysically foundational,” they “can seriously and unqualifiedly be demanded from fellow human beings.”

In his discussion of punishment O'Donovan patiently dissects the standard theories of punishment, noting that—whatever we say about the precise connections among retribution, deterrence, and remediation—anything called punishment must be “backward-looking” and hence, in some sense, retributive. But he is not persuaded by any account of retribution that thinks of it as a simple exchange—in which the offender receives back something rather like the wrong he inflicted. Instead, O'Donovan suggests that we should think of punishment as *attributive* rather than *retributive*. What the offender gets back “in return” is precisely society's judgment of himself as an offender—not an “echo” but an “answer.” He hears the truth about himself.

The precise nature of the answer will always be to some extent conventional and, hence, will vary from one society to another. But in two important ways this act of judgment should now be shaped by Christian faith. There is, first, a Christian “prejudice in favor of mildness,” and it

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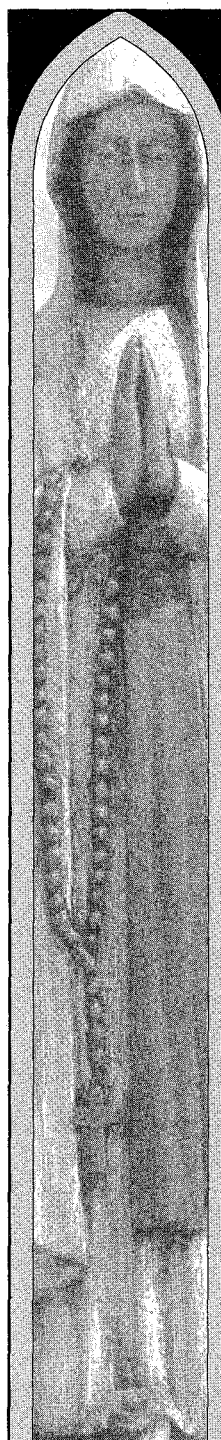
must have its effect on our conventions of punishment. More important still, whereas theories of punishment normally seek to benefit the society at large (by deterrence), the offender (by remediation), and the victim (by retribution), a Christian political ethic leaves no place for the thought that one purpose of punishment is to benefit the victim. God himself has taken the side and the place of victims, and—though government as God's servant must defend the right of victims—no private act of vengeance is needed or permitted. Hence, "it is a measure of the deep de-Christianization of our times that it is once again possible to speak in public of the victim's interest in punishment."

In the second part of *The Ways of Judgment*, O'Donovan turns to the manner in which political authority represents (or fails adequately to represent) a people's shared life. Here he takes up within the contours of a Christian political ethic many of the topics one expects to encounter in political theory: the nature of political rule (and, in particular, the relation of force to the state), the nature of "representation," and the justice of representative structures (their legitimacy; their standard division into legislative, executive, and judicial powers; and their relation to international institutions).

"Mankind is communal by virtue of God's creation, not by political invention." Thus does O'Donovan distinguish himself from great contract theorists of both early and late modernity (such as Hobbes and Rawls). A people must have some kind of shared identity before a political authority can arise that truly represents it. In developing this claim, O'Donovan clearly has his gaze focused on the possibility of a European Union worthy of the name. Its emergence must depend upon the prior presence of a range of communications "so necessary and natural" that they require corporate represen-

tation. "When the Italian who moves in next door is not a foreigner, but merely from out of town; when it requires no comment or explanation that the chief of police for Northern Ireland is from Denmark, or a Spaniard heads an elementary school for the children of Prague, and every-

one automatically speaks English, then a European people is at hand." This explains why O'Donovan insists that a shared identity as a people is a work of "moral imagination"—a work, one might add, which on his account has quite some way yet to go. Especially in light of



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recent events, one wishes that O'Donovan had also turned his analysis inward—toward the question of whether and how a common British identity can survive in the face of multiculturalist politics and a home-grown Islamist threat.

Important as a people's common identity is to O'Donovan's account

of representation, to focus on it carries considerable danger—and it is on this point that his account of representation has an important theological bite. All political representation, necessary though it is, can easily slip into idolatry. "In the political self-consciousness of Israel there was a polemic against national representa-

tion in the insistence that YHWH alone could represent his people." Justification is needed for the fact that political rulers limit social freedom in countless ways. If we justify this only in terms of what is necessary to sustain a people's shared identity, that identity itself has come perilously close to being an idol. A more adequate justification must ask how preservation of a people's identity at any given time can "be brought to serve *that* common good which belongs to the all-embracing identity, individual and collective, of God's kingdom." Right though this question seems, I confess to some perplexity about how political leaders could be in a position to answer it—other than, perhaps, simply by limiting the pretension of their claims.

In the third part of *The Ways of Judgment*, we encounter O'Dono-

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van in his most theologically penetrating mode. If the characteristic political act is that of judging (right from wrong), and if the New Testament proclamation of the Cross is "counter-political" in its command that Jesus' followers "judge not," political *theology* comes to its sharpest practical point when these meet. This does not mean that political judgment is overthrown; it means that it is an "interim service"—that "moment in parentheses" between the pre-political society God created and the post-political society toward which the life of the Church even now seeks to point.

There is an important sense, therefore, in which the Church must be characterized as "unpolitical." If the Church can be spoken of as a *polis*, living under God's rule, it is also the *bride* of Christ. And in a passage that

provides a welcome refinement of his treatment in *The Desire of the Nations*, O'Donovan notes that the eschatological community toward which the Church points will be post-political, living "without structure or form other than the immediate presence of God and the Lamb in its midst."

As a standing witness to the interim character of all political rule—as a society that seeks to model "what it means for human beings to live together without judging"—the Church, paradoxically, presents through its very existence a political teaching and influence: "it restrains the thirst for judgment; it points

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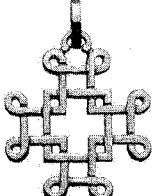
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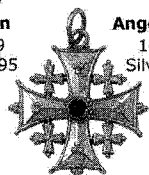
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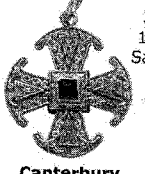
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beyond the boundaries of political identity; it undermines received traditions of representation; it utters truths that question unchallenged public doctrines.”

TO DO JUSTICE TO THE life of any society, political ethics must there-

fore pay attention not only to the act of judgment and to the representative institutions that participate in that act; it must also give some attention to what it means for human beings to live toward the eschatological judgment of God. This requires attention to the “communications” (*koinonia*)

that mark a people’s common life, attention to the life of the Church, and attention to the conscientious individual who—in personal relation to the risen Lord that cannot be mediated by any institution, even the Church—must finally (in Kierkegaard’s language) “judge for oneself” what is right and true.

Communication involves and includes all sorts of sharing that take place in a society. The logic of communication points toward a society that unites those who remain individual and different. But this does not mean that the individual and his possessions are prior, or that society is fashioned out of our individual interests. Human community comes first as God’s gift; for part of what it means to be human is that individuals are made to live in society.

Thus, to take one example, the right to property is “simply and solely the right to make dispositions for the common good; it is the command on resources which allows us to be participating agents in social communication.”

Theologically instructive as this argument is, one may wonder whether it makes quite enough space during this moment in parentheses for the multitude of ways in which our societies east of Eden try to reduce all forms of social communication to some politically given measure or put all forms of communication in service of general social goals.

In the face of such possibilities, it is important to underscore with O’Donovan the truth that a society—as the totality of many overlapping spheres of sharing—“has no ‘business’; it exists simply as the *coherence* in which the spheres of communication flourish in relation to each other.”

When we think of the many different societies in the world, not to mention the countless spheres of communication within them, we may doubt that it is sensible to believe in the unity of the human

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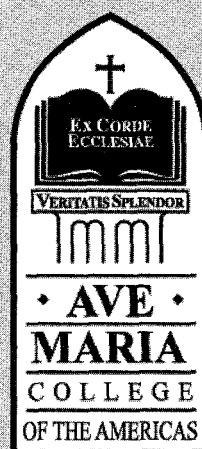
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race. Only the Church makes it sensible. "Apart from 'one holy catholic and apostolic church' the posit of universal human fellowship is irreconcilably in contradiction to the concrete and bounded spheres of communion that we actually live in."

Yet, there is still a sense in which we can rightly speak even of that Church as invisible, pressed down into the heart of the individual who believes. For there may be moments—"times of testing"—when the conscientious individual can only with difficulty discern where true Christianity is to be found and must judge for oneself, must be the Church in one's time and place, trusting that "in a line of faithful apostolic transmission of belief from the heart" rather than "in any other type of institutional succession" the "deepest continuity" of the Church is to be found. For it is finally the individual believer, "filled with the Holy Spirit," who "participates directly and subjectively in the life of God."

IT IS STRIKING TO NOTE, having come to this point, that the Church is also an interim institution, on O'Donovan's account. Both political rule that enacts judgment and the community that seeks to live beyond judgment are moments in parentheses. It is individuals, who must judge for themselves, who are finally drawn into that most complicated of communications that is the eschatological praise of God.

"In the kingdom of heaven, when the rulers of the nations cast their crowns before the throne of the Lamb, the institutions of judgment will be redundant. And so will be the counter-political institutions of the church itself." Thus, political theology, as O'Donovan has brought it to fruition, points ultimately beyond the political (and beyond the political even in the form of the counter-political) to a different image: the marriage supper of the Lamb.

## What Do Zombies Think?

SWEET DREAMS: PHILOSOPHICAL  
OBSTACLES TO A SCIENCE OF  
CONSCIOUSNESS

by DANIEL C. DENNETT  
MIT Press, 199 pages, \$28

Reviewed by Edward T. Oakes

I ONCE ATTENDED a lecture by a philosopher who, in the midst of a tirade against the Christian right, interrupted himself and admitted that his atheism also had a problem: "I hate to admit it," he conceded, "but I am a *qualia* freak." Among philosophers working on the mind/body problem, the word "*qualia*" stands for all those features of consciousness that give awareness its specific identity as a particular kind of experience: the redness of red, the sadness of depression, the piquancy of papaya juice, the irk-

EDWARD T. OAKES, S.J., teaches theology at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, seminary for the archdiocese of Chicago.

someness of traffic jams, the crankiness that comes from insomnia, the hurt feelings arising from playground taunts, and so forth.

Here's the problem in a nutshell: there seems to be no immediately obvious scientific explanation for how electrical firings inside the brain can give rise to these peculiar *qualia*. What does electricity, shooting through the raw meat of the brain, have to do with supply-side economics, office politics, or misunderstandings in a marriage?

Qualia constitute the central challenge for any philosopher who wants to provide a fully naturalistic account of consciousness based on the neurochemistry of the brain. Does consciousness add something to the workings of the brain, with it controlling them (at least in some circumstances, like the decision to pick up a pencil)? Or is it merely the product of brain events, with no more role in running the operations of the cerebellum than steam has in causing heat in a teakettle? If computers can crunch numbers better than humans, and if they can beat chess masters at their own game, all the while being

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totally unconscious and just blindly following an algorithmic computer program, can they also someday mimic *all* human behaviors without exception, while also still remaining utterly unconscious? (Noam Chomsky, for one, says that to call a chess-playing computer "intelligent" is like entering a forklift in an Olympic weight-lifting competition and giving it the gold medal for its greater hefting prowess.)

Of course, the question works both ways. If a finely-tuned robot could mimic all human behaviors (including reporting what would be pain if it were human), then the mechanical naturalists would have proved their point that the brain is nothing more than computerized flesh—or so they claim. But others, like philosophers John Searle and Thomas Nagel, say that even if such a

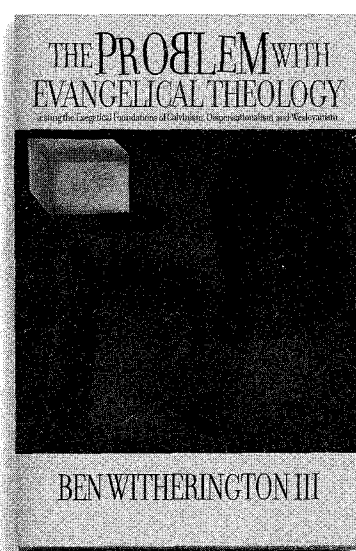
robot could be invented, it would be, by definition, a "zombie" (another overworked term in the mind/body lexicon). In other words, such a robot would merely be a more extreme version of a human sleepwalker, an automaton that does things by program and not by conscious decision. But everyone knows, simply by consulting his own experience, that the alleged "program" of the human brain results in something more than a sleepwalking ability to avoid bumping into things and to get snacks out of the refrigerator unawares.

Dennett calls this common objection to his project the "Zombie Hunch," meaning the queasy sense most of us have that materialists like Dennett have left something out. (One reviewer of Dennett's earlier book *Consciousness Explained* said

the title should have been *Consciousness Explained Away*.) He counters this hunch by extending it, in a strange thought-experiment, to Martian zombies sent to earth as anthropologists to study human behavior. By hypothesis they cannot get inside the human minds of their subjects, since they have no intersubjective substrate of their own. According to Dennett, these Martian anthropologists would then discover that human behavior in fact displays no such intersubjectivity of its own either: Everything the Martians see in the way humans act can be explained by the standard norms of their science, and since *they* are missing that extra mental stuff, why assume humans have it either?

As should be immediately obvious, such an interplanetary project requires the personal motivation of

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extraterrestrial ambition, research grants from the Martian Institute of Technology, heated argument among the little green men, and so on—which means Dennett has already introduced mental awareness into his thought-experiment, a point that will strike the reader when the author describes the behavior of his exo-anthropologists:

For the sake of argument consider that the Martians might be zombies, whose data-gathering and scientific theorizing [are] all accomplished without a trace of “phenomenonality” or “qualia” or whatever you take to be the hallmark of real consciousness. . . . [These] Martians would soon discover that a scientific theory of consciousness is widely held by Earthlings to be impossible. . . . And more importantly, what would they make of the hypothesis that there was something that they, the Martians, couldn’t know about human consciousness that we, the Earthlings, can know? . . . One of the texts that the Martians would surely study is Descartes’s *Meditations* (1641) and they would find it speaking forthrightly to them.

With such phrases as “would soon discover,” “what would they make,” and “they would find,” Dennett is forced to slip in non-Zombie verbs to make his thesis work. (One savors the irony that these lines come from the same man who insisted in an op-ed article for the *New York Times* two years ago that society should start calling atheists “the Brights” because they’re so much smarter than theists. Right.) An even more bizarre passage occurs a few chapters later: “One of the themes about qualia that is often presupposed but seldom carefully discussed was memorably made explicit for me by Wilfred Sellars, over a fine bottle of Chambertin, in Cincinnati in 1971: I had expressed to him my continuing skepticism about

the utility of the concept of qualia and he replied: ‘But Dan, qualia are what make life worth living!’”

Indeed. They are also what can make life hellish, aggravating, or anxiety-ridden—not to mention what allow us to call a bottle of Chambertin “fine.” In other words, experience is inherently an experience of qualia (just try to imagine an experience without them). In fact, so much are qualia the inherent objective pole of all experience, reading Dennett’s book suddenly made me realize what Bishop George Berkeley was driving at when he called his philosophy of subjective idealism a republication of common sense. He is famous (or notorious, if you prefer) in the history of philosophy for his principle *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived), which was popularly taken to mean that if you’re not aware of something, it doesn’t exist, a conclusion the bishop himself was able to avoid by relying on God, the All-Perceiver, to keep things in existence while we’re nodding off during atheists’ lectures, a divine escape-hatch wittily satirized by the famous limericks often ascribed to Ronald Knox:

*There was a young man who said  
“God  
Must think it exceedingly odd  
If he finds that this tree  
Continues to be  
When there’s no one about in the  
Quad.”*

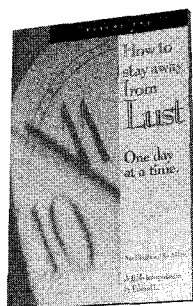
*“Dear Sir, your astonishment’s odd;  
I am always about in the Quad  
And that’s why this tree  
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Since observed by . . . Yours faithfully,  
God.”*

So who is reviewing this book? A collection of robotic cells that is churning out a review *claiming* to disagree with the book because the organism cranking it out happened to go through a peculiar form of religious upbringing that led him to become a Catholic priest? Or is he a solipsistic Berkeleyan ego who has been so bombarded with sense impressions and qualia his whole life that he can’t find convincing any attempt to explain away consciousness by means of neurology?

In his *Apologia* Cardinal Newman said that as an adolescent he could

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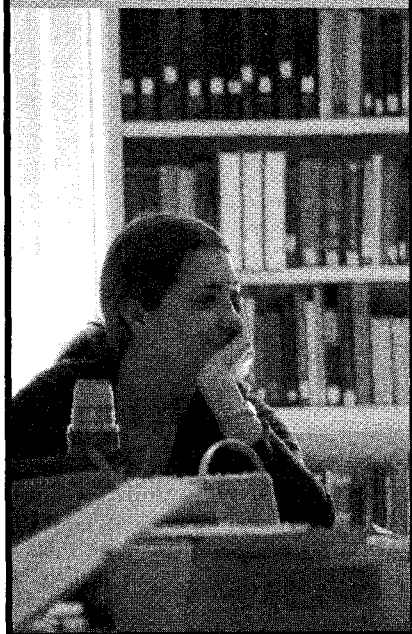
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acknowledge only two realities, God and his soul, to such an extent that it was difficult for him to believe in the reality of the material world. As Dennett's title openly asserts, materialist accounts of consciousness continually run into snags—and reading his attempt to answer those objections had the paradoxical effect of making me see Newman's point. So I turned to the writings of the English cardinal himself and found an infallible sign of his genius: Well over a century and a half before Dennett sat down at his computer to write his book, Newman had already reviewed it. In *The Tamworth Reading Room* (1841) he wrote:

Physical philosophers are ever inquiring whence things are, not why; referring them to nature, not to mind; and thus they tend to make a system a substitute for God. . . . The study of Nature, when religious feeling is away, leads the mind, rightly or wrongly, to acquiesce in the atheistic theory, as the simplest and easiest. It is but parallel to that tendency in anatomical studies, which no one will deny, to solve all the phenomena of the human frame into material elements and powers, and to dispense with the soul. To those who are conscious of matter, but not conscious of mind, it seems more rational to refer all things to one origin, such as they know, than to assume the existence of a second origin, such as they know not. . . . If we come to [nature] with the assumption that it is a creation, we shall study it with awe; if assuming it to be a system, with mere curiosity.

This can hardly have been his intention, but Dennett's exuberant curiosity, vivid writing style, and, above all, his forthright attempts to deal with the enigma of consciousness in terms consonant with his mechanical naturalism, will have the paradoxical effect of bringing his readers to a renewed sense of awe at the miracle of the soul.

## Knocking on Heaven's Door

LIFE AFTER DEATH: A HISTORY OF THE AFTERLIFE IN THE RELIGIONS OF THE WEST

by ALAN F. SEGAL

Doubleday, 866 pages, \$35

Reviewed by Jerry L. Walls

I SUPPOSE IT IS APPROPRIATE for a book on eternal life to be long. Given the ground Alan Segal, a professor of Jewish studies at Columbia University, covers, *Life After Death* had to be long. Ten years in the making, Segal's book explores the development of belief in the afterlife in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, Israel, Iran and Greece. He continues the story by examining the period of the second temple in Jewish thought, the rise of apocalypticism and millenarianism, sectarian life in New Testament times, New Testament views of afterlife, pseudepigraphic literature, the Church fathers, the early rabbis, and Muslim views of the afterlife.

Through the course of this investigation, the author appears to discuss nearly every ancient text that has anything of interest to say about afterlife in the cultures that he covers. And to illumine these ancient texts, Segal examines modern apocalyptic movements as well as contemporary literature on mystical experiences, near-death experiences and the like. By any measure, this book must be recognized as an extraordinary achievement.

The author's professed aim is to produce a work of social history. Early on he writes: "We will not ask theological questions so much as the basic question of a historian: 'cui bono'?" To whose benefit is this belief in the afterlife?" However, readers

JERRY L. WALLS is professor of philosophy of religion at Asbury Theological Seminary.

are clued in right away that this book is not concerned simply, or perhaps even primarily, with answering questions about ancient history. On the first page, after a brief look at Hamlet's reflections on revenge and suicide, Segal turns to consider the Muslims who perpetrated the tragic events of September 11, noting that in the minds of some they will receive special rewards in heaven for their uncommon piety and commitment.

The intersection of belief in life after death and political activity, dramatically illustrated by September 11, is not foreign to American culture. As Segal observes, the return to religion and church membership by baby boomers in the 1980s corresponded to a dramatic upswing of political action by conservative religious groups. Intimately involved in these political controversies are

beliefs about life after death. As our author puts it, "Asking about an afterlife still defines a crucial and very conflicted battlefield in American life, one that challenges our political as well as religious convictions."

More Americans say they believe in life after death than say they believe in God, and there is a fundamental divide over how Americans conceive of the nature of resurrection and life after death. Liberal believers hold either to the immortality of the soul or, at best, a spiritual resurrection, but others, including Christian evangelicals and Orthodox Jews, insist on a bodily resurrection. Indeed, Segal suggests, the "distinct line" that divides conservative believers from liberal ones is "the big story in American religion at the beginning of the twenty-first century." It seems clear that he intends his book to

address this divide and its practical implications, not the least of which are social and political.

Segal finds the story of the afterlife in Egyptian history particularly telling, because there is a clear record of change and development. Initially, it was only the pharaoh who was believed to be blessed with immortality, but over the centuries, as social circumstances changed, more and more people were included in the Egyptian vision of the afterlife. Segal takes this as vivid support for his thesis that views of the afterlife invariably mirror the values of the society producing them. Another interesting example is the difference between the social contexts where belief in immortality of the individual soul thrived as opposed to the social contexts where belief in bodily resurrection was dominant. "Immortality is

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the ideology of the rich" contends Segal, because it "valorized their intellectual pursuits." Belief in resurrection, by contrast, flourished in a context of persecution and deprivation, appealing particularly to activist groups by giving martyrdom a transcendent justification.

Segal thinks it likely that the notion of resurrection was originally a Zoroastrian idea, but he is cautious in his judgments about how different religions influenced each other (because of difficulties in dating various documents), and he suspects that there was cross-fertilization among

Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. Jewish adaptation of the idea of resurrection took distinctive shape as a tool to explain the martyrdom of righteous persons: "The doctrine of judgment and rewards and punishments in the afterlife was first articulated because it was necessary that the doctrine develop to help people understand the implications of their faith. Wherever the idea comes from, it was tailored to Jewish sensibilities by the time it appeared in Jewish culture."

Some of Segal's historical judgments are tendentious. For instance, traditional Christian readers will take exception to the wedge he attempts to drive between Paul's account of the resurrection and that of the gospel writers.

He spends an entire chapter on Paul and argues at length that he was a mystic whose witness to the resurrection was based on his visions of Christ in Heaven. "In flat contradiction to Paul, the Gospels (when they discuss the process of resurrection at all) strongly present a physical, fleshly notion of Jesus' bodily resurrection." Moreover, Segal asserts, "neither body of writing gives us what actually happened."

Despite his professed intention to provide a social history and to avoid theological questions, Segal ventures squarely into philosophical and theological territory in the afterword to his book. There he offers his reflections on our prospects for knowing the truth about the existentially vital and inveterately controversial matter of life after death. The prospects as he sees them are not good. Moreover, this is a good thing.

First, he rules out the possibility that religious belief can be confirmed in anything like the scientific sense. Rather, belief in God and the afterlife are human ideals that give meaning to our lives, and as such they exist in our minds more than in the objective world. This does not make them less important for Segal, but it does mean

# A Week Away...

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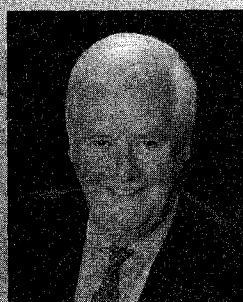
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that God and the afterlife should not be taken as literal truths.

Next, he contends that history cannot show the truth of the afterlife. The conflicting claims among different religious traditions necessarily relativize all such claims and underscore his central thesis that "afterlife notions are mirrors of our cultural and social needs." Moreover, diversity within the canonical tradition of the various religions—such as the alleged contradiction between Paul and the Gospels—shows that someone must be wrong, and we have no way to determine who is right. Indeed, Segal contends that "history is, in fact, a construction of our minds, as redactors and editors of all the reports." This makes it extremely dubious that we could ever get at what "actually happened."

Finally, Segal dismisses the suggestion that we might be able to know the truth about the afterlife through divine revelation. "God may be sending revelations but we are talking to ourselves when we interpret our scriptures." Apparently our hermeneutical biases are such that we have no more hope of getting straight a divine revelation than we have of getting an accurate picture of past history.

So where does this leave us? Here is Segal's answer: "Either we must view the beliefs selectively, taking seriously only the one that appeals most to us, convert, and become true believers of that religion—any religion—or we must face the surety that all are, at best, but approximations of what may await us. Or maybe nothingness awaits us." Notice, for Segal, it is a "surety" that all religions are at best approximations of what may await us, even if that is nothingness. We can be sure that no religion gives us a true account of God and the afterlife and if anyone is sure of the opposite, they have a faith that is not properly chastened by doubt. As Segal puts it in a nutshell, "Doubts complete faith and

keep it from becoming fanaticism."

He is prepared to go even further. In the last pages of his book, he returns to Shakespeare and suggests that our religious values should be understood "as a script for the performance of a life." As such, they are important and meaningful and even

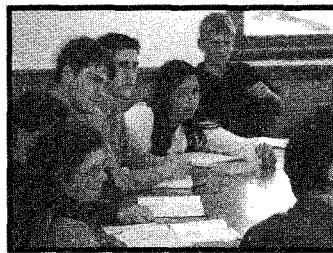
true "in their own way, even if they are fiction." Fictional faith, or faith completed by doubt, are Segal's antidotes to fanaticism.

WHILE PERHAPS MOST will agree that fanaticism is a bad thing, Segal's recipe for avoiding it requires true

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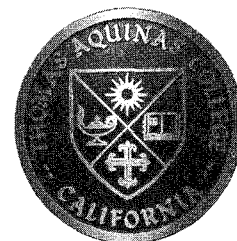
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believers to invert what we can be sure about. If there is no God and nothingness awaits us, then Segal is surely right that we are hardly in a position to be sure about either God or the afterlife. But if there is indeed a God and He has revealed to us the crucial truth necessary for eternal salvation, then it is much more likely we could know this and even be properly sure of it.

Moreover, if the Christian revelation is true, we can know that God forbids murder and requires us to love even our enemies. Such knowledge, I would argue, is a better antidote to fanaticism than pervasive doubt that God even exists. In any case, it remains to be seen whether those who are sure that the truth about God and the afterlife eludes us will be more tolerant of those who insist otherwise, than the latter have been of them.



The Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, invites applications for a tenure-track appointment in **Religion and Society** to commence on 1 August 2006. Applicants must possess a PhD and expertise in the areas of ethics and either law or public policy. They will have a strong background in the Western tradition, a solid research and publication record, and experience in teaching and in the public sphere. A letter of application, statement of research goals, and curriculum vitae should be submitted together with a completed questionnaire (available at [www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies](http://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies) after December 1). These and three confidential letters of recommendation should be sent to: B. Barry Levy, Dean, Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, 3520 University Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3A 2A7. Contact Professor Torrance Kirby at (514) 398-4128 or [torrance.kirby@mcgill.ca](mailto:torrance.kirby@mcgill.ca) for further information. The application deadline is 31 January 2006. All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply. Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. McGill University is committed to equity in employment.

## Sweet Reason

HUMAN LIFE, ACTION,  
AND ETHICS: ESSAYS

BY G.E.M. ANSCOMBE

edited by MARY GEACH AND  
LUKE GORMALLY

Imprint Academic, 300 pages, \$69.90

Reviewed by Robert P. George

"EACH NATION THAT has 'liberal' abortion laws has rapidly become, if it was not already, a nation of murderers." The person who spoke those words was not Operation Rescue's Randall Terry, or the Reverend Jerry Falwell, or some fundamentalist preacher from the Ozarks. She was one of the twentieth century's most eminent academic philosophers—indeed, a woman who might fairly have claimed (though it would never have occurred to her to make such a boast) to be the greatest woman philosopher in modern history: G.E.M. Anscombe.

Anscombe, a Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford, who later succeeded her mentor Ludwig Wittgenstein in the chair in philosophy at Cambridge, spoke those words in a lecture delivered in German and published for the first time in English in *Human Life, Action, and Ethics*, a superb collection of Anscombe's essays, edited by her daughter Mary Geach—a fine philosopher in her own right—and Geach's husband Luke Gormally.

The volume brings together essays ranging from her profoundly influential article "Modern Moral Philosophy" on. All of the essays pertain to what philosophers, following Aristotle, call "practical reasoning." Most are about what people have reason to do and not do, and what they ought to do and ought not to do. Not every essay is concerned with ethics, strictly speaking. Several, especially those in

Part Two, focus on philosophical psychology and related subjects, elaborating and developing key ideas about how human acts are to be understood. (Of course, properly understanding human action is critical if we are to evaluate it intelligently from the ethical point of view.) It was work in this area—above all her 1957 book *Intention*—that established Anscombe as an intellectual giant. As Mary Geach observes in the book's introduction, "*Intention* changed the consciousness of Anglo-Saxon philosophy, making everyone aware that actions are intended under descriptions, and that they are at least to be judged under those."

Most of what is set forth in the essays in the final part of *Human Life, Action, and Ethics* will be of interest principally to professional philosophers. But the earlier essays are accessible to general readers and will be interesting to anyone who aspires to think rigorously about moral theory and normative ethics. Of course, as anyone familiar with Anscombe's writings knows, reading her work is never an effortless task. As Mary Geach says, "She does not carry the reader along, as some authors do (Newman is an example). Yet some people prefer her sort of writing, like the confection *panforte*, all fruit and nuts and no dough, very chewy and tough."

Anscombe was a powerful and determined opponent of abortion, euthanasia, and the intentional killing of noncombatants in war (even in justified war). In considering these questions, she drew on the resources of Catholic philosophy (she was a convert to the faith as was her husband, the distinguished philosopher Peter Geach) and the history of philosophy generally. Yet, she never hesitated to correct what she regarded as errors in traditional philosophical doctrines and ways of thinking or improve on ideas she drew from them. For example, though she did not dismiss the idea of "double effect," as some

ROBERT P. GEORGE is the Cyrus Hall McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University.

philosophers of her generation did, she carefully analyzed and cleaned up the parts of what turns out to be a rather complex philosophical doctrine to show that whether an act counts as "intentional killing" is one thing, but whether the act is justified even if it can be shown to qualify as the unintended causing of death is something else.

Anscombe coined the term "consequentialism" (which she introduced in "Modern Moral Philosophy") to name the view, widely held today even by people who reject the classic utilitarian identification of good with pleasure and evil with pain, that there is no act that cannot in certain circumstances be justified by its good consequences or by the bad consequences that would likely follow from not performing the act. Consequentialism, in her opinion,

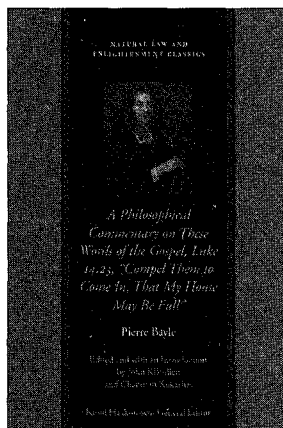
has proven to be a profoundly destructive force, not only in ethics considered as a field of academic philosophy, but in the ethical lives of individuals and cultures. The conviction that a little evil may rightly be done for the sake of a greater good, or for the sake of preventing a greater evil, puts human beings on the path to losing their grip on good and evil altogether. We would not have gotten those "liberal" abortion laws in the first place were it not for the widespread adoption of an essentially consequentialist view of right and wrong.

Interestingly, Anscombe had doubts about whether the early human embryo is a human being. Because in the very early stages of development the embryo can divide and give rise to monozygotic ("identical") twins, Anscombe was puzzled by the exact status of early embryon-

ic human life. She wrestles with the problem in two essays reprinted in the volume: "Were You a Zygote?" and "Embryos and Final Causes." Never, though, was Anscombe tempted to conclude that abortion—even early abortion—can be justified. As Mary Geach quotes her, "even if it were certain that, for example, a week-old conceptus is not a human being, the act of killing what is in the earliest stages of human life has evidently the same sort of malice as killing it later on when it is unquestionably a human, or more than one."

For my part, I don't think the possibility of twinning creates the puzzle that Anscombe thought it creates, so I think the evidence shows that the embryo is from the beginning of its existence at conception (or, in the case of an embryo produced by cloning, with the activation of the enucleated

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ovum into which the nucleus of a somatic cell has been inserted) a human being. Indeed, Anscombe herself allows that the early embryo is a "living individual whole whose life is—all going well—to be the life of one or lives of more than one human being." That's certainly right. And

this "living individual whole" is nothing less than a complete and distinct human organism possessing all of the genetic material needed to inform and organize its growth, as well as an active disposition to develop itself using that information. The direction of its growth is *not extrinsically deter-*

*mined*, but is in accord with the genetic information *within* it. The human embryo is not, then, something different in kind from a human being, nor is it merely a "potential human being," whatever that might mean; rather the human embryo is a human being—a whole living member of the species *Homo sapiens*—in the embryonic stage.

The fact that a human individual in the embryonic stage can divide or be divided into two individuals is no cause for doubting whether the individual is a human being. Consider the parallel case of division of a flatworm. Parts of a flatworm have the potential to become a whole flatworm when isolated from the present whole of which they are part. Yet no one suggests that prior to the division of a flatworm to produce two whole flatworms the original flatworm was not a unitary individual and a whole living member of the species.

In "Embryos and Final Causes," Anscombe correctly observes that "the Catholic Christian Church has always objected to procuring abortion, but to this day has not adopted the doctrine of immediate animation." But the reason the Church has so far held back from officially adopting this doctrine is not because of a puzzle about twinning. It is because until fairly recently in modern history we lacked the knowledge of embryogenesis and early human developmental biology to say securely what we now know with certainty, namely, that even the early embryo is a complete, self-integrating human organism that by directing its own integral organic functioning develops himself or herself to the next more mature stage of his or her life. We now know securely that the difference between an embryo and a fetus, infant, child, adolescent, and adult is not a difference *in kind*, but is rather a difference *in biological maturity or stage of development*. Embryos and human beings are not different kinds of beings; an embryo is simply a human

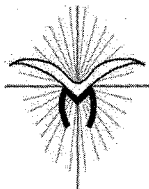
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being in the earliest developmental stage.

Anscombe's "theoretical doubts," as she called them, did not erode what she called her "practical certainties" about the need to respect and protect by law human life at all stages and in all conditions. Nor did they induce in her any willingness to tolerate the dehumanization of the child in the womb. I was once at a conference where the theologian Lisa Sowell Cahill objected to an analogy proposed by another speaker, Russell Hittinger, between slavery and abortion. Cahill said that African-Americans whose ancestors suffered the horrors of slavery could reasonably take offense at Hittinger's comparing them to embryos. Anscombe, who was also in attendance, immediately intervened to say: "the lady should not say 'embryo,' but rather 'conceived child.'"

Late in her life Anscombe and one of her daughters became active in the British equivalent of Operation Rescue. They got themselves arrested for blockading an abortion clinic in an effort to stop the abortions being performed there. She was in every way a practical philosopher.

## BRIEFLY NOTED

**IN TIERS OF GLORY: THE ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT OF CATHOLIC CHURCH ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THE AGES**  
by MICHAEL S. ROSE  
*Mesa Folio*, 136 pages, \$29.95

A few years back, Michael S. Rose wrote *Ugly As Sin*, a fine denunciation of the sterility of contemporary Catholic church architecture and the damage it has done to the celebration of the Eucharist. He also offered traditionally oriented alternatives to the thin modernist gruel "liturgical designers" continue to inflict on the

faithful. Now he has written a stylistic history of Catholic places of worship, from their roots in the Hebrew tabernacle and Temple of Solomon and the basilicas of ancient Rome right down to the modernist dark age and the traditionalist movement now slowly gathering force. *In Tiers of Glory* is addressed to the layman, not the scholar. Excellent idea. But telling this vast story in an extensively illustrated text of just 113 pages (excluding the glossary) is a tall order. By and large, Rose has brought it off nicely. He is not a graceful writer, but he has a knack for cutting to the chase. He proceeds sequentially, from the sacred architecture of the Old Testament to the early Christian basilicas, then on to the Byzantine and Romanesque cathedrals and churches, and from there to the Gothic, the classicism of the Renaissance, the baroque and rococo, the neoclassicism and "revival" styles of the nineteenth century, and on to the present day. He does not, however, pursue the "organic development" theme to the extent that it warrants inclusion in the book's title. There are also minor problems with the text. It makes no sense for Rose to name, with precise dates, the three successive stylistic phases of English Gothic without offering any description of those phases. It makes even less sense to quote, uncritically, the discredited materialist claptrap of the French architect and theorist, Viollet-le-Duc, about the Gothic boiling down to a structurally determined system. (Viollet might as well have called the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris a machine for worshiping in.) Moreover, it is not true that Le Corbusier's histrionic monastery of La Tourette closed. It ceased to house a *studium* decades ago, but a reduced community of Dominicans resides there still. As for the illustrations, it would be better to include no image of the Temple of Solomon at all than the weird, misconceived colossus that Rose includes. There are some fine

photographs—a couple of baroque churches in Lima, Peru, are particularly memorable—but I don't think many readers want to look at the campanile of St. Mark's in Venice tilted at a sixty-degree angle. Too many photos are similarly skewed. On the other hand, renderings of traditional church designs by contemporary classicists including Matthew Enquist, Dino Marcantonio, and Duncan Stroik make for an encouraging conclusion to this informative and eminently readable book.

—Catesby Leigh

**CREED WITHOUT CHAOS: EXPLORING THEOLOGY IN THE WRITINGS OF DOROTHY L. SAYERS**  
by LAURA K. SIMMONS  
*Baker*, 182 pages, \$19.99

"Everyone who lives on milk lacks experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties are trained by practice to discern good and evil"—or so the Letter to the Hebrews tells us. Dorothy L. Sayers infused her writing with the same purpose. Her nonfiction works on Christian doctrine and the role of Christianity in every aspect of daily life posited the reader's acceptance of or at least interest in a call to progress toward spiritual maturity. Her goal? To emphasize that "religion is concerned, not merely with what happens in the spiritual world, or what becomes of us after death, but also with what happens here and now in this world." Laura K. Simmons, a professor at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, examines Sayers' nonfiction, revealing her advocacy of clear religious thought as well as her passion for bringing a living Christ back into the daily routine. Simmons insists that Sayers' work remains relevant today, with its rejection of a vaguely formed personal relationship with God in favor of solid intellectual understanding of theological principles. Simmons' book serves as an out-

line of Sayers' theological writings, focusing on essays, speeches, and letters that exhibit Sayers' skill in rendering Christianity intelligible. Sayers sought both to explain theology in familiar terms and to relate it to daily life, writing, as she put it, "in terms of cats and cabbages and other familiar phenomena" to create understanding and motivate worship. Exploring Sayers' three principal contributions to theological reflection and discussion, *Creed Without Chaos* examines how Sayers educates her readers through specific restatement and clarification of Christian doctrine, "countering the prevalent impression that the Christian religion is unreal, depressing, and fit only for very stupid people." Simmons explores how Sayers investigated traditional theological themes including, for example, the Incarnation, which Sayers believed was "the most dramatic thing that entered into the mind of man." The book also highlights Sayers' theological reflections on secular themes and her vision that all labor, including work as mundane as the making of safety pins, is a sacramental act by which God is both glorified and worshiped. The final chapters emphasize how pertinent Sayers' doctrinal explanations and theological work ethic remain for today's believers—a call to the spiritual adulthood demanded by the Letter to the Hebrews.

—Maria Andraca Carano

**THE AMERICAN CLASSICS:  
A PERSONAL ESSAY**

by DENIS DONOGHUE

Yale University Press, 295 pages, \$27

New literary criticism from Denis Donoghue should be cause for celebration, and this latest volume initially promises much: a "personal essay" on five classics of American literature. Unfortunately, the result is something of a muddle. Under cover of demonstrating why certain mid-nineteenth-century works continue to

matter to American national life, Donoghue has produced a cranky polemic about the ills of American Empire. Moreover, the book is done in by bouts of vertiginous critical commentary that affirm Donoghue's deep reserves but fail to remind us of his lively, incisive sensibility. Donoghue sets out to read *Moby-Dick*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Walden*, *Leaves of Grass* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with two worthy aims: first, to explain how these works "make available to readers . . . a shared cultural experience, something in which American society is otherwise impoverished," and second, to suggest how they "put in question the otherwise facile ideology of individualism on which American culture complacently prides itself." The opening chapter on Emerson, whose thought created "most of the context of these five books," criticizes him for extolling the virtues of unrestrained individualism to the point of romanticizing a national character prone to hubris. While subsequently advancing this thesis through readings of the literature, Donoghue gets sidetracked into shrill complaints about the current administration and the ugliness of American power in general. For instance, since "Bush has been remarkably successful in persuading the American people to endorse a simple allegory of good and evil," Donoghue complains, "it would be difficult, in these lurid circumstances, to read *Moby-Dick* as anything but a revenge play." Besides revealing ivory-tower distaste for lowly leaders and citizens alike, Donoghue here joins a crowded chorus in lamenting the difficulty of dissenting from imperial consensus these days. This canard in turn limits his critical imagination to the rather banal contention that *Moby-Dick's* primary focus should be understood as "good and evil interpenetrated." Later readings are gratefully stronger, particularly on the misanthropic hypocrisy that opens up between the

substance of *Walden* and of its author, and on the "easy" glory of sin when "theology is reduced to psychology, and morality to good fellowship" in *The Scarlet Letter*. Yet this same chapter also exposes Donoghue's tendency to engage in painfully overwrought critical play. Donoghue's reading of *Huck Finn* is actually a running commentary on the novel's scholarly paper trail. Meanwhile, with Whitman, Donoghue indulges in especially snide remarks: If "The United States are essentially the greatest poem," as the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass* proposed, then, in this critic's opinion, "it is a poem long disfigured by stanzas featuring murderous adventures in the Philippines, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq (to name a few, with probably more to come)." While these five books are indeed works of permanent relevance to American civilization, the same cannot be said of this angry little brief from an erstwhile accomplished scholar.

—Randy Boyagoda

**THE BAD CATHOLIC'S GUIDE TO  
GOOD LIVING**

by JOHN ZMIRAK AND DENISE  
MATYCHOWIAK

Crossroad, 240 pages, \$14.95

Chesterton remarks somewhere that a Protestant typically says he is a good Protestant while a Catholic typically says he is a bad Catholic. Two young Catholics who manifestly love the Church make the most of that, offering a frequently hilarious, sometimes sophomoric, romp through the church year, the legends of the saints, and the oddments of Catholic sacramental practice. Recipes for the celebration of feasts and fantasies abound. The book will not be everybody's cup of tea—or, more aptly, pint of ale—but those who like this kind of thing will undoubtedly like it very much.

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## MORE ON BIBLE BABEL

Back in May 2001, I wrote in this space, under the title "Bible Babel," about the translation that is the unfortunate *New American Bible* (NAB). It is a subject that should not be dropped. Not, mind you, that I expect anybody to do anything about it any time soon. But some day, please God, there will be a real reform of the misguided reforms of recent decades, and the NAB (along with the Revised NAB and the Amended Revised NAB and whatever version of the NAB that crops up in this Sunday's Mass guide) should be on the agenda. Robert Louis Wilken has written wisely that the Bible is the lexicon of the Church and the liturgy is the grammar of the Bible. Among Catholics subjected to the NAB, and all are now subjected to it, the lexicon takes a terrible beating.

Everyone who has sung or listened to Handel's "Messiah" knows the words: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6, KJV). Magnificent. Here, as of this week's amended Missalette, is the New American Bible: "For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace." Try singing that. Whether under the rules of literal accuracy or of what, taking liberties, translators call "dynamic equivalence," that is no more than a pedantic transliteration of the Hebrew. It is not a

translation. It is a string of possible signifiers. It is not English. To be fair, the passage is not representative. Most of the NAB is English, albeit of a down-market variety.

One has to wonder what those in charge of Catholic translations thought they were doing since the NAB project was launched. An answer commonly given is that they wanted to produce the most literally "accurate" translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts. It is usually said that Catholics are not biblical literalists, but that appears not to hold in this instance. Even literalism does not explain the many eccentricities introduced in the NAB. Probably the best known of all psalms is Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd." In the KJV and the RSV, the psalm concludes with, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Readers of the Douay-Rheims express the confidence that they will "dwell in the house of the Lord for length of days." That is very open-ended and may be very much like "forever."

Even the more recent and trendy New Revised Standard Version invites me to believe that "I will dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long." My whole life long will, please God, be life eternal. Then comes the NAB: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come." For years to come? It inevitably prompts the question of how many. Ten? Twenty? Fifty? Whatever the answer, it would seem to be far short of forever. Note that there is nothing in the Hebrew that requires or even suggests such a change. But what's the point of doing a new translation unless it is different from earlier translations?

The problems begin with the very first verse of the Bible. In the English tradition, solidly grounded in the Hebrew as well as in Jerome's Latin translation, Genesis 1 begins with the majestic words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Here is what the NAB offers us: "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters." Compare that with the English tradition, followed almost exactly by Douay-Rheims: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters." Apart from the NAB's deaf ear to poetry and theological suggestiveness, the very first words of the very first verse of the Bible raise a question of no little importance. Note the difference between "In the beginning God created..." and "In the beginning, when God created..."

"In the beginning God." Homilies and theological reflections beyond numbering have pondered and probed those four words. It is God and God alone who is in the beginning; He is the source and acting subject of all that follows. If we do not get that right, we will not get right all that follows. Very different is the NAB's rendering, "In the beginning, when God." Here there is no invitation to ponder and probe what and who is meant by God. The knowledge is taken for granted; the reader's attention is immediately turned from the acting subject to His actions. "In the beginning was the Act." That is not, from the beginning, how Christians have understood the matter. The writer of the Fourth Gospel begins with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The great student of the Fourth Gospel, C.K. Barrett, writes, "John intends that the whole of his gospel shall be read in the light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true, the book is blasphemous." That, says Barrett, is the significance of the tie to Genesis 1, "In the beginning God..."

From the apostolic and patristic eras up through magisterial and theological writings of the present day, the parallel between Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 has been the source of the most profound reflections. God who was in the beginning is now revealed in Jesus the Christ who is God. The great Augustine, writing in the fifth century, insists upon the parallel wording. As in the beginning is God, so in the beginning is the Word who is God. Here he is preaching against the Arian heresy which claimed that the Son is not truly God but was created as an agent for creating the world. No, insists Augustine: As in the beginning God, so in the begin-

ning the Word. That parallel, so crucial to the entire gospel story, is quite thoroughly obscured by the NAB. From the beginning, the NAB introduces unwarranted novelties that not only further erode what remains of a common biblical vocabulary but are often blithely indifferent to the Church's tradition of theological reflection.

Consider the parable of the prodigal son: After his dissipation in a "far country" (NAB has "distant country") the RSV, following the English-language tradition and the Greek text, says "he came to himself." NAB says "he came to his senses." No, he didn't just become more sensible. He came to himself; he returned to who he truly was, the beloved son of the loving father. The theologically literate preacher is regularly compelled to correct the NAB translation prescribed for public reading. Those responsible for the NAB and its perpetual updatings are not heretics and I am sure they do not intend to be doctrinally subversive. It would appear that they are simply indifferent to the great tradition of the Bible in English, frequently indifferent to the history of scriptural interpretation in the Church, and almost always indifferent to good English usage.

So why do they, and so many other translators, do what they do? The answer is undoubtedly related to the fact that, without the production of novelties and revisions, translators would be out of a job. A telling indictment of the NAB is that it is not used or even referred to by non-Catholics and is seldom employed by Catholic biblical scholars who, quite sensibly, prefer other translations. It is a translation that is used at all only because its use has been made mandatory.

But perhaps a few more examples are in order. In Mark 10:9, Our Lord says of marriage, "What therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder" (RSV). The NAB renders this, "What God has joined together, no human being must separate." No human being *must* separate, but a human being *may* separate? Perhaps angels must separate? Then there are the much quoted words of Psalm 111, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Compare that to the never-to-be-quoted rendition of NAB, "The fear of the Lord is the first stage of wisdom." St. Paul exhorts Timothy to "preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season." In the NAB—in the event you were wondering what clunky means—that becomes, "be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient." It is too easy to imagine an NAB version of the Gettysburg address: "Approximately eighty-seven years ago, political leaders developed a system of government..."

The NAB assumes that readers and listeners may be a bit slow on the uptake. Here is Genesis 18 in the RSV: "Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?'" Here is the NAB read at Mass: "Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years, and Sarah had stopped having her womanly periods. So Sarah laughed to herself and said, 'Now that I am so withered and my husband is so old, am I still to have sexual pleasure?'" Just in case you didn't get it, the story is about sex. A little before that, the NAB says, "He had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant." The RSV: "And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived." Like the high school health text, the NAB is worried that we may miss the point.

The NAB picks up on cultural ticks. Some while back I was in conversation with a national columnist who regularly used "righteous" as an adjective of denigration. For instance, she would criticize "righteous political leaders." I suggested that surely she meant "self-righteous," to which she responded that righteous and self-righteous are today synonymous. I thought of this again when working on a Sunday homily. The text was Luke 18, and the NAB renders verse 9 this way: "Jesus spoke this parable addressed to those who believed in their own self-righteousness while holding every one else in contempt." The KJV, RSV, NIV, and other standard English translations all speak of those who trust in their own righteousness, correctly translating the Greek *dikaioi*. It is of more than passing interest that the NAB translators seem to agree with the columnist that righteousness today means self-righteousness. But what sense does it make to say that they believed in their self-righteousness? Imagine someone boasting, "I'm more self-righteous than you are!"

Examples can be multiplied almost book by book and chapter by chapter. In 2 Timothy, St. Paul declares, "I have fought the good fight." Fight the good fight. The bracing phrase echoes and re-echoes in high culture and everyday life. What does the NAB give the Catholic people? "I have competed well."

In the face of every affliction, Paul says in Romans 8, "we are more than conquerors" (RSV). The NAB says "we conquer overwhelmingly." On the Church's relationship to earthly powers, the words have rolled down the centuries: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." The NAB: "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." We have taken something from Caesar and from God that we must repay? Don't ask. The line of Matthew 22:14 is still commonly heard: "Many are called but few are chosen." NAB: "Many are invited, but few are chosen." What is gained by the change? What is lost?

St. Paul to the Philippian: "Have this mind among you, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he

was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." NAB: "Have this attitude in you which was in Christ Jesus." Jesus had an attitude? There is a significant difference between having the mind of Christ and having the attitude of Christ. Not to mention that literate speakers of English do not speak of a person having an attitude "in" him. In the translation of the four gospels, the NAB regularly says that Jesus "cured" rather than "healed" people. In standard English "cure" connotes a medical remedy while "heal" connotes making a person whole. At least the NAB does refer to Jesus as a healer rather than a "curer."

The tone-deaf linguistic wreckers of the Catholic Biblical Association have a great deal to answer for. But it seems that few bishops are prepared to fight the good fight against the atrocities being perpetrated. The tradition of the Bible in English is mangled and banalized at almost every opportunity; the poetic is flattened into the prosaic and the suggestively allusive is forced to submit to the arbitrarily chosen obvious. Literalism joined to a penchant for the insipid succeeds in producing a text that is, at the same time, irritatingly quirky and surpassingly dull. It might be argued that a merit of the NAB is that it discourages—indeed, precludes—the dubious practice of teaching the Bible as literature.

Nevertheless, for the foreseeable future Catholics are stuck with the NAB in its ongoing revisions of revisions. There seems to be little chance that the bishops or the liturgy industry will make available lectionaries or entire Bibles in the RSV or in the more recent and quite splendid English Standard Version, which rivals the RSV in respecting the tradition of the King James and Douay-Rheims. Of course, younger Catholics, those born since 1970, for instance, never knew that tradition. It is their great loss.

The imposition of this embarrassingly third-rate translation is made definite by a provision of the otherwise welcome 2001 instruction from Rome's congregation for worship, *Liturgium Authenticum*. The instruction says that "in order that the faithful may be able to commit to memory at least the more important texts of the Sacred Scriptures and be formed by them . . . there should exist only one approved translation, which will be employed in all parts of the various liturgical books." The American bishops, alas, chose the NAB. Had they chosen a more worthy translation, there would have been a fierce uproar from the guild of Catholic biblical scholars who perpetrated the NAB. In addition, there is a thoroughly misplaced proprietorial pride in this being a Catholic translation: It may not be very good, but it is ours.

The result is a loss keenly appreciated by those who grew up with what literary critic Alan Jacobs describes

as “a shared language, of particular words and phrases that resonated in the common ear—words and phrases whose meanings could be tested, considered, deployed, and redeployed in an infinitely varied set of contexts.” Think of those generations of English-speaking peoples “separating the wheat from the chaff,” “lying down in green pastures,” sometimes being “weighed in the balance and found wanting” but at other times “fighting the good fight” and “putting on the whole armor of Christ”—the whole vast array of discourse (much of it richly poetic) demonstrating that it is very difficult to share *thoughts* when we do not share *words*. Because Christians are counseled to “be of one mind,” we should be more attentive to the particular words that shape and form our minds. To have once again a widely shared English Bible would be a significant step towards that one mind in Christ.

It is a great pity that our churches and our culture have largely lost a common biblical vocabulary. The blame rests with academic Bible scholars and with the hustlers of the very big business of multiplying and marketing ever-more-novel versions of the biblical text. But the decay of a culture- and soul-forming tradition is also the fault of the bishops, and it is their very particular fault that the Catholic people are saddled with among the clunkiest of translations, the New American Bible. Yes, I know that there is not much to be done about it, or at least that those who could do something seem not to be interested. And yes, I know that it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. But sometimes it is necessary to curse the darkness as well, just to prevent our getting used to it.

Literate converts coming into communion with the Catholic Church, of whom, despite all, there are more and more, are regularly struck by the banalities and eccentricities of scriptural readings and liturgical texts. They are grateful for being received and do not wish to complain, but the blunting of literary sensibilities should not be a price exacted for becoming Catholic.

And now I will let this subject rest for a while. I do not promise that I will not return to it at some later time. It is important that Catholics who are week by week subjected to the NAB know that someone—in the words of a former president—feels their pain. And they should know that they are not limited to this inferior translation in their personal reading and Bible study groups. Then too, those responsible for the translation might be embarrassed into reconsidering their trashing of the tradition of the Bible in English. Finally, the bishops might reconsider their choice of the NAB, or at least petition Rome to allow the liturgical use of other and worthier translations. Or maybe not. In which case, we will during the scriptural readings at every Mass have occasion to remember Flannery

O'Connor's sage observation that we frequently must suffer more from the Church than for the Church.

FT

## “ARE JEWS SMARTER?”

That's putting the question bluntly, but there's really no other way of putting it if you're going to put it at all. Jennifer Senior, who is Jewish, is emboldened to write an article under that title by the fact that the *New York Times* and the *Economist* have also reported on a new study that gives a strongly affirmative answer to the above question. Writing in *New York* magazine, she explains that the study suggests that there is a causal connection between the vulnerabilities of Ashkenazi Jews to certain diseases (Tay-Sachs, for instance) and the apparent compensation of greater brain power. It's the old question of nature vs. nurture; in this case, whether it's more important to have Jewish genes or a Jewish mother. As it turns out, most Jews have both.

So is a study such as this good for the Jews? Senior writes, “I talk to Abe Foxman, legendary head of the Anti-Defamation League, whose life's mission is the pristine upkeep of the Jewish reputation. His answer surprises me. ‘If it's a genetic condition,’ he says, ‘it's not for us to embrace or reject. It is what it is, and that's the way the genetic cookie crumbles.’ I detect a note of pride in his voice.” Senior is somewhat more ambivalent: “Freud and Marx, Einstein and Bohr, Mendelssohn and Mahler. The brothers Gershwin. The brothers Marx. Woody Allen. Bob Dylan. Franz Kafka. Claude Lévi-Strauss. Bobby Fischer. Jews may take tremendous pride in their aristocracy, but we fetishize it at our own peril; to suggest that we're chosen, rather than that we make our own choices, curdles quickly into a useful argument for anti-Semites who'd love to claim that the objects of their derision are immutable vermin. It can't be an accident that the most aggressive debunkers of Jewish essentialism, including the participants in this story, are generally Jews themselves.”

To the question of whether Jews are smarter, I expect most people—Jews and non-Jews, philo-Semites and anti-Semites—would likely say it is true as a generalization, although all but the anti-Semites would quickly add that people must be judged on an individual basis. The Senior article, like most writing on this topic, is a bit coy. It's nice to know you got it, but you shouldn't flaunt it. At the same time, it's permitted to write about how you shouldn't flaunt it, not-so-implicitly flaunting it.

There is a more serious dimension to this discussion. One cannot help but be nervous about the

renewed candor in discussing genetic differences. Historically, genetics and eugenics are closely related, and the latter has a very ugly history. The reaction is very different when the same questions are studied in relation to other identifiable groups, such as Americans of African descent, and the answers turn out not to be so complimentary. Ask Charles Murray, co-author of *The Bell Curve*. Whatever one's race or ethnicity, a measure of pride and preening about it is understandable and perhaps inevitable, but it is the polite thing to keep it within the family, so to speak.

Comparisons between genetically defined groups are inherently problematic and tend toward the invidious. If one group is generally smarter, the other is generally less smart. What is the point of scientific studies that reinforce prejudices (i.e. pre-judgments) based on life experience? Murray was unhappy when I asked that question in my review of *The Bell Curve*. Such studies, he contends, can encourage us to rethink educational and other policies that are premised upon the assumption of innate equality. That is not a dumb position, but neither is it wise. It easily leads to what is aptly called the bigotry of low expectations. It is very difficult, to say the least, to incorporate Murray's position into a polity based on equality.

Every bright eighth-grader congratulates himself on the discovery that the assertion of the Declaration of Independence is not literally true. In ways important and unimportant, it is not the case that all are created equal. Call equality our "founding mythology," if you like, but it is crucial to the foundation of the American order and our efforts to get along more or less amicably. We need not try to play tricks with our minds, pretending that we do not know what we think we know about certain kinds of people in general—positively and negatively, based on scientific studies or anecdotal experience. Life would be unmanageable without such generalized assumptions.

When it comes to asserting publicly the genetic and ethnic assumptions that are usually muted, some say that Jews, because of their past suffering and minority status, should be given an exemption from observing the protocols of assumed equality. There are and should be exemptions. For instance, for humor that is not intentionally vicious or hurtful. The attempt to ban jokes that may offend the super-sensitive is both wrongheaded and futile. With the effective prohibition of anything that anyone might deem hurtful, a vast silence would fall upon the world.

Part of the observance of the unenforceable that makes life livable, however, is a learned awareness of proprieties. In serious public discourse that impinges upon respect and social opportunity for real people, the protocol of presumed equality is indispensable. The

question "Are Jews smarter?" inescapably invites the question, "Smarter than whom?" And that quickly becomes problematic. To the objection that the only reason we're made so nervous by that further question is because of the history of race and racism in this country, the answer is: That is not the only reason, but it is one very good reason.

FT

## BONHOEFFER TODAY

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor and theologian who was born in 1906 and executed at the direct orders of Adolf Hitler on April 9, 1945, at the Flossen-berg prison in Bavaria. On this centenary of his birth, we offer a series of excerpts from the writings of a man who is justly honored as one of the great witnesses—as in "martyrs"—of the century past.

Shortly before the outbreak of the war, Bonhoeffer was studying in the United States and became personally acquainted with Reinhold Niebuhr and other major American thinkers. Convinced that his duty required him to share the fate of his people, Bonhoeffer returned to Germany—to life and death under a regime he conspired to overthrow. From Pastor Bonhoeffer we have a number of books, all happily in print in English and some of them undoubted classics: *Life Together*, *The Cost of Discipleship*, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, and his *Ethics*. The following is from the last work, published by Macmillan: "Our forefathers are for us not ancestors who are made the object of worship and veneration. Interest in genealogies can all too easily become mythologization, as was known already to the writers of the New Testament (1 Timothy 1:4). Our forefathers are witnesses of the entry of God into history. It is the fact of the appearance of Jesus Christ nineteen hundred years ago, a fact for which no further proof is to be sought, that directs our gaze back to the ancients and raises in our minds the question of our historical inheritance. The historical Jesus Christ is the continuity of our history. But Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah of the Israelite-Jewish people, and for that reason the line of our forefathers goes back beyond the appearance of Jesus Christ to the people of Israel. Western history is, by God's will, indissolubly linked with the people of Israel, not only genetically but also in a genuine uninterrupted encounter. The Jew keeps open the question of Christ. He is the sign of the free mercy-choice and of the repudiating wrath of God. 'Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God' (Romans 11:22). An expulsion of the Jews from the West must necessarily bring with it the expulsion of Christ. For Jesus Christ was a Jew."

## WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ *Columbia Journalism Review*, published by the journalism school of Columbia University and often described as a watchdog of the practices of the press, has a long piece, "Articles of Faith," by Kiera Butler. It is all about the rumpus over the retirement of Fr. Thomas Reese as editor of *America*, a Jesuit magazine. The matter was discussed at some length in these pages (Public Square, August/September). There is one reference to your scribe ("an outspoken conservative Catholic thinker") in an article mainly devoted to what a fine fellow Fr. Reese is (true enough) and how thoughtful Catholics fear his leaving is the portent of a Vatican witch hunt. And so forth. Bishops, we are told, are trying "to rid diocesan papers of controversy." Perhaps so, but it is more likely that they want their papers to engage controversy in a way that leaves no doubt that the papers are on the side of the Church. As for the future editorial policy of *America*, Ms. Butler concludes, "the world will be watching." *America* should be so lucky. FIRST THINGS, too, for that matter.

■ Students from Christian high schools are having a hard time getting accepted at the University of California, Riverside. The university deems some of the high school courses to be biased in favor of Christianity. The curricular review extends to religion classes. "Religion and ethics courses are acceptable," says the university, "as long as they do not include among its [sic] primary goals the personal religious growth of the student." If only we were making this up.

■ The subject is C.S. Lewis and moral education. It will be remembered that in *The Abolition of Man* Lewis calls what we most fundamentally know about moral truth the *Tao*. (Screwtape in *Screwtape Letters* refers to such maxims as "primeval moral platitudes.") Gilbert Meilaender writes, "We should not think of moral education as indoctrination, but as initiation. It is initiation into the human moral inheritance: 'men transmitting manhood to men.' We initiate rather than indoctrinate precisely because it is not *we* but the *Tao* that binds those whom we teach. We have not decided what morality requires; we have discovered it. We transmit not our own views or desires but moral truth—by which we consider ourselves also to be bound. Hence, moral education is not an exercise of power over future generations." In Lewis' *That Hideous Strength* the final effort to control and reshape nature is directed by an

evil organization called the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments, with the acronym of NICE. Meilaender notes the "rather nice irony" that in Britain the National Health Service has recently established a National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) to formulate guidelines about the use of quality-of-life assessments in the clinical care of patients.

■ Paul Dean is head of English at the Dragon School, Oxford, and is deeply offended by the portrayal of W.H. Auden as a serious Christian. That is the portrayal offered in a new book from Yale Press by Arthur Kirsch, *Auden and Christianity*. It's all nonsense, writes Mr. Dean. "Brought up in the High Church (which also means High Camp) tradition, Auden was fond of ritual and ceremony; for him, religion was a branch of aesthetics rather than the other way around." Never mind that Auden wrote to the contrary. A common critical judgment is that Auden was a better poet before he went to America in 1939. Kirsch says that judgment reflects an anti-religious prejudice since "The American Auden is emphatically a Christian Auden." Mr. Dean is having none of it and selects some second-rate lines Auden wrote in America to prove his case. Mr. Dean's clinching evidence is Auden's observation that a young man's sexual impulse is at odds with the world of right and wrong. Dean writes, "A telling comment if ever there was one!" One infers that Mr. Dean had a very tranquil boyhood. Dean cites a catty remark "someone" made about Auden: "Wystan doesn't really love God, he just fancies Him." As for Dean, he is sure that Auden "ended in darkness." It is obvious that he very much wants to believe that Auden was not a serious Christian and ended in darkness. Why he wants to believe that, he does not say. For a more reasoned and persuasive discussion of what Auden believed, see Arthur Kirsch's *Auden and Christianity*.

■ Here's a different twist on John Allen's book, *Opus Dei: An Objective Look Behind the Myths and Reality of the Most Controversial Force in the Catholic Church*. I have commented favorably on the book ("While We're At It," November) and the review by Mollie Ziegler in the *New York Sun* also has positive things to say. But she is troubled because, she says, Allen "keeps a journalistic distance from the real action—the theological divide between Opus Dei and its liberal and conservative critics." She explains: "Escriva's vision and mission are theologically radical. Laypeople supervising priests is arguably anti-clerical. The view that all Christians can co-redeem the world could be perceived as denigrating the work of Jesus Christ. Teaching that day jobs are the spiritual equivalent of the Eucharist—both are 'places where Christ is made present' and sac-

rifices are given to God—might be anti-sacramental.” These are criticisms of Opus Dei from the right, so to speak, and are seldom mentioned in discussions of the movement. I don’t think there is much merit to the criticisms, but it is of some interest to see them aired.

■ I have expressed misgivings about the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) being taken in by environmental groups that are glad to have Christian support for their frequently very un-Christian purposes. The Reverend Ted Haggard, president of the NAE and pastor of the huge New Life Church in Colorado Springs is aware of such misgivings and responds in an interview in *Christianity Today*. Asked about his relations with the environmental organizations, he says: “We don’t respond to them. They’ve all tried to reach us and communicate with us, but we are so diametrically opposed to some of the traditional environmentalist philosophies that we don’t return their phone calls, because we think this should be an evangelical Christian issue. We think the environmental solutions should come from our philosophy of human responsibility and dignity, because we’re in the image and likeness of God, rather than we’re a fellow animal in the animal kingdom. We think that our approach is a pro-business, pro-free market approach to environmental problems, where their approach is typically anti-business and anti-free market. Their solutions will never work. It’s going to require our approach to improve some of our environmental problems. I think our strategy is better. Our strategy is more thoughtful. Ultimately, since God created it all and God is sovereign and God will judge it all in the end, it’s only God-type solutions that will work. All the other attempted solutions that various human beings will try will fail.”

■ That may not count as a refined philosophy, but it’s not a bad statement of sound intuitions. As *Christianity Today* observes: “In Haggard, one can see the new confidence of American evangelicalism. Previously consigned to the margins of respectable society, today’s evangelicals are on a roll. Those like Haggard enjoy their newfound influence and haven’t paused to sort out a philosophy of culture engagement. They’re too busy making a difference.” Haggard is committed to helping persecuted Christians elsewhere, but as for Christians in America, and maybe especially in Colorado Springs, “I do not believe life is so hard. I think it is easy to live a good life.” I know you think you know what I’m thinking, but it would almost sound churlish to mention the cross.

■ On the fortieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s document *Nostra Aetate*, Pope Benedict sent

a letter to Walter Cardinal Kasper, head of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. In advancing Jewish-Catholic relations, Benedict says, “I have expressed my own firm determination to walk in the footsteps traced by my beloved predecessor Pope John Paul II.” It is perhaps noteworthy that he says the Vatican Council laid the foundations not simply for a new relationship between Jews and Christians but a new relationship “between the Jewish People and the Church.” Twice in the short three-hundred-word letter he lifts up the importance of *theological* dialogue. He also calls for a shared witness “to the One God and his commandments,” including “the sanctity of life.” His reference to the Holocaust underscores that it was “inspired by a neo-pagan racist ideology.” Important points are made in what may be viewed as a brief pro forma statement: The rejection of the claim that the Holocaust is rooted in Christian anti-Semitism; the emphasis on the corporate and not only personal dimension of the Jewish-Christian connection; the importance of common witness on the sanctity of life; and the Council’s call for dialogue that is theological. Benedict’s every statement invites close parsing.

■ John Silber reviews Jerome Karabel’s *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*. He begins by asking, “If Franklin Delano Roosevelt applied to Harvard today, would he get in?” Harvard, one might point out, accepts only living applicants. But Silber has a serious point: “Why does Karabel devote so much attention to the admissions policy at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton unless he actually believes that they still offer an almost exclusive path to membership in the American elite? In fact the three schools, while extraordinary in many respects, long ago lost their controlling grip on the levers of power. More senators have bachelor’s degrees from Brigham Young University than from Princeton; the vast majority of senators attended fine universities in their own states. Despite enormous endowments accrued over decades of serving the interest of the wealthy, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton are not uniformly excellent in all fields. A high school student interested in history can do very well at Yale, but one interested in philosophy might do better at Rutgers University. Students interested in the life sciences have a wide choice of schools with stronger programs than Harvard’s. All this raises a heretical thought. What if Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, purportedly America’s answer to Oxbridge, are in fact more like the nation’s other universities than they are different from them? The question, in other words, might not be whether FDR could get into Harvard today, but rather: Would he apply?” It should be noted that Silber has the good

grace not to mention Boston University, where he is president emeritus and achieved wonders in enhancing that school's academic distinction.

■ “We, the undersigned faith-based leaders and organizations . . .” That’s how the statement, included in a short press release, begins. It calls for, among other things, “An opportunity for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria and, over time, pursue and option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens.” There are an estimated eight to twelve million illegal immigrants in the United States, the largest number being from Mexico. The statement’s call for liberalizing immigration law does not use the word “amnesty,” but that is what opponents call it. And it may be, in effect, what the White House will propose. Sensible people can and do disagree about what should be done about immigration. The interesting thing about this statement is that it is signed by thirty-eight organizations, of which thirteen are Jewish, six are Catholic (for example, the Jesuit Conference, and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men), and the others are associated with oldline Protestant social action groups. One signatory stands out, however: “U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.” What might this say about the identity and influence of the Catholic bishops of America? Do they think of themselves as one among thirty-eight “faith-based leaders and organizations”? Do they think their influence so diminished that they need to join a coalition of organizations which, put together and multiplied by ten, is a fraction of the Catholics in America whom the bishops presumably represent? Just asking, mind you. But putting the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in the same league with the Anti-Defamation League and the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office does seem very odd. Not incidentally, the statement received no media attention that I have noticed, whereas a considered statement by the American bishops on moral judgment and immigration policy might be of widespread interest. Are the bishops hiding their light under a bushel of “faith-based leaders and organizations”? Oops, I already asked that question.

■ Under intense pressure from the fevered media, hungry lawyers, and nervous insurance companies, the U.S. bishops at their Dallas meeting in 2002 hurriedly put together a number of measures aimed at definitively consigning the sex-abuse scandal to the past. Among these was the establishment of an Office of Child and Youth Protection and the adoption of a “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.” The lat-

ter was slightly revised and reissued this past June, but it still includes Article 12, which requires dioceses to “maintain ‘safe environment’ programs . . . to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations.” While these programs are supposed to “be in accord with Catholic moral principles,” many thoughtful Catholics think they are sex-ed by another name. In a pastoral letter, Bishop Robert Vasa of Baker, Oregon, asks probing questions about the implementation of Article 12 and concludes that he cannot “expose the children of the diocese to harm under the guise of trying to protect them from harm.” He is by no means alone, although he may not be joined by many bishops. The head of a distinguished Catholic school speaks convincingly of his enormous respect for his bishop. “But,” he says, “if the bishop insists upon Article 12, the parents will be in rebellion, and they’ll be right. No way is the school going to expose third-graders to the details of ‘inappropriate touching’ and ‘sexual boundaries.’” Catholic principles, one might be inclined to think, include protecting childhood innocence, discouraging early sexual expression, and affirming the primary responsibility of parents for teaching the facts of life. I expect more bishops will be hearing from parents and schools who believe that young children should be protected from protection programs that plant in young minds the seeds of sexual fear and suspicion. For information on how one diocese, in compliance with Article 12, is trying to protect children without harming them, write Nancy Walla, of the Archdiocese of Denver, at [nancy.walla@archden.org](mailto:nancy.walla@archden.org).

■ “Goodbye, Catholics” is an article in *Commonweal* by Mark Stricherz explaining how the 1972 McGovern Commission wrested control of the Democratic Party from Catholic and other leaders who were attuned to the working class and the values of most Americans. Stricherz is writing a book on the alienation of Catholics from the Democratic ranks and, to judge by this article, it should be interesting. In the same November 4 issue is Daniel Finn’s “Hello, Catholics: Republicans & the Targeting of Religious Voters.” Finn teaches economics and theology at St. John’s University in Collegeville. Finn alleges, if you can believe it, that Republicans are engaged in a deliberate strategy to get voters who identify themselves as religious to vote Republican. Furthermore—brace yourself for this—they are using opposition to abortion to advance their nefarious purposes. Republicans have, says Finn, hoodwinked “perfectionists” who actually want to end the unlimited abortion license. He writes: “Moral perfectionists take the position that if abortion is the most fundamental moral issue today, then striving for politi-

cal change on abortion should outweigh pressing for change on all other issues. So powerful and pervasive is this mistaken belief that I would not be surprised if at least some of these moral perfectionists misunderstand this essay and claim that it indirectly advocates abortion simply because it questions the political judgments the church has made in opposing abortion." Of course Daniel Finn does not advocate abortion, directly or indirectly. He simply thinks there are many things as important, or more important, than abortion, and he is unhappy that Christians have been made "attractive targets for strategic manipulation by politicians bent on reaping political gain from their constituents' moral convictions." He ends with this: "*Caveat credens*. Let the believer beware." Watch out for politicians who are responsive to the moral convictions of the people. I am sure that Professor Finn does not intend to encourage cynicism, but he is compelled to tell the truth: Politicians want to get elected! Say it ain't so, Joe.

■ There is the good Pope Benedict and then there is the bad Pope Benedict, according to Margaret O'Gara who teaches theology at St. Michael's in Toronto. Or, more accurately, it's the good Ratzinger and the bad Ratzinger. Writing in *Commonweal*, she says the good Ratzinger is the man with long experience in ecumenical relations who had a major hand in the initiatives of John Paul II. The bad Ratzinger—and here she reaches way back—is the man who was involved in, for instance, the removal of Fr. Charles Curran from Catholic University and the imposition of restrictions on Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle because of, among other things, his "pastoral outreach to the gay community." She cites the statement of an Episcopal seminary when Curran was removed in 1986: "The question is whether or not the Anglican Communion should envision closer ecumenical relations with a church that seems officially determined to suppress public discussion, debate, dialogue, or even disagreement." (*Even disagreement?* The suggestion would seem to be that suppressing public discussion, debate, and dialogue about the teaching of the Church is bad enough, but at least disagreement should be allowed.) And now "the question is" whether there will be an Anglican Communion with which to have any kind of relations at all.

■ One can hardly imagine more dramatically different visions of America than those provided by Martin Heidegger and G.K. Chesterton. That is the subject of Peter Augustine Lawler's essay in *The Intercollegiate Review*, "Homeless on 'Paradise Drive': Two Views of Americanization." He is reviewing David Brooks' *Paradise Drive* and other writings, and comes to the con-

clusion that Brooks is closer to Heidegger than to Chesterton. For Heidegger, "Americanization" meant the "inauthentic existence" of obsession with technological fixes against meaning, mortality, and Being. For Chesterton, who, unlike Heidegger, actually spent some time here, America was living the discovery that we are equal human beings situated between the other animals and God. Of course, it probably would not have made any difference if Heidegger did have first-hand experience of America; so very different was his philosophy of life. Chesterton famously said that America is "a nation with the soul of a church." America, he said, is about "making a home of vagabonds and a nation out of exiles." It is a "home for the homeless" who are on the way to the country where they will be homeless no more. Chesterton's understanding is grounded in doctrine, even dogma, Lawler writes, while David Brooks agrees with sociologist Alan Wolfe that religion in America is simply a matter of individualistic preferences in search of "whatever works" to make one feel better. Lawler writes, "If oblivion to Being is the price to be paid for opportunity and prosperity, Brooks answers Heidegger, so be it." Lawler may be too hard on Brooks. Brooks is on many scores a very astute social critic. Yet there is in his writing, and especially in his writing about religion in America, more than a whiff of what Alan Bloom called "debonair nihilism," which he then attributes, altogether too sweepingly, to his fellow Americans.

■ There is another passage in the Lawler article that is well worth reading: "In one of his most countercultural columns, Brooks notices that the exurbs contain a disproportionate number of 'natalists' or people whose 'personal identity is defined by parenthood' and who have three or more children. Natalists 'are more spiritually, emotionally, and physically invested in their homes than in other spheres of life, having concluded that parenthood is the most enriching and elevating thing they can do.' Birthrates are plummeting throughout Western Europe, Canada, and large parts of the United States, but not in the exurbs. Areas of our country that some view 'as sprawling materialistic wastelands' are seen by 'many natalists . . . as clean, orderly, and affordable places where they can nurture children.' People who have big families, Brooks goes on, 'are explicitly rejecting materialistic incentives and hyperindividualism.' They are, in others words, rejecting 'Americanism' as described by Heidegger (and Brooks). Mainly, if not only, because of such people, America, from Heidegger's view, is now the least 'Americanized' place in the prosperous West. Because of the natalists, the U.S., Brooks notices, 'stands out in all sorts of demographic and cultural categories,' and there is a clear correlation

between natalism, attendance at religious services, and conservative voting patterns. Brooks attempts to downplay the connection between orthodox religious beliefs and big families. But Philip Longman, for instance, says that if it weren't for such religious Americans, our birthrate would be roughly the same as that of the France, which is fading away. The natalists who understand themselves more as parents than as individuals usually also understand themselves more as creatures than as individuals. America, we are tempted to say, is now divided between Heidegger's technological nihilists or free individuals—who believe they can define themselves as they please—and Chesterton's dogmatists, who see themselves as parents, creatures, and citizens." (The Philip Longman book to which Lawler refers is *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What to do About It*.)

■ Martin E. Marty quotes Duke's Stanley Hauerwas, who is interviewed in *Homiletics* magazine. "We are a country mesmerized by fear," says Hauerwas. On September 11, "death was brought to the American shore. It's a reality Americans do not want to confront." Apparently Americans pretended that nothing important had happened on September 11. Hauerwas is especially outraged that President Bush said people should go out and shop in order to show their determination to get on with life. Then Hauerwas does an about-turn, complaining that Americans overreacted to September 11. "There's a connection between the amount of money Americans spend on medicine and our reaction to 9/11. Both are attempts to deny that we're not going to get out of life alive." Or maybe just an indication of wanting to live a little longer? Hauerwas continues: "The worst thing that happened was the words, 'We are at war.' September 11 was not war, it was murder. You want to arrest murderers." Well, yes, but these particular murderers were already dead. Moreover, the murderous network of those who directed the attack called it war and were supported by states that called it war. It is hard to know how we might have gone in to arrest the responsible parties without war, as in being "at war." Hauerwas does not say. As a principled pacifist, he recognizes no obligation to say. Marty says his words are deeply "meaningful" and, as difficult as it may be to figure out what Hauerwas means, who am I to dispute the meaning of meaningful? Hauerwas is quoted as declaring, "One of the things that bothers me deeply is how seldom preachers tell their congregations the truth!" Me, too.

■ While strongly favoring burial in the earth, in 1963 the Catholic Church for the first time permitted the

practice of cremation. The 1983 Code of Canon Law states: "The Church earnestly recommends the pious custom of burying the bodies of the dead be observed, it does not however, forbid cremation unless it has been chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching." Until very recently, cremation was typically chosen for reasons contrary to Christian faith, specifically Christian belief in the resurrection of the body. Alvin J. Schmidt, a Lutheran ethicist, has written a little book, *Dust to Dust or Ashes to Ashes?* (Regina Orthodox Press), arguing that Christians should still reject cremation. Along the way, he casts light on some increasingly bizarre funeral practices: "Recently, another phenomenon has begun to become part of our society's death-denying posture. Some funeral directors now are providing services in various settings that reflect a key interest or hobby the deceased person had or valued in life. If the deceased was an avid basketball fan, for instance, the funeral director has the mourners sit around a basketball hoop next to the coffin; if the individual loved outdoor grilling, a grill and its accessories are the focus of attention, together with the aroma of corn roasted on the cob; and if the person, say, a woman, greatly enjoyed baking, an oven with loaves of bread and a stove covered with cakes are located near the coffin in the mortuary." In *Balsamic Dreams*, a book on the baby boomer generation, Joe Queenan complains about those who "transform the traditional funeral service into a ludicrous stage show." Funerals, he writes, "are no longer somber rituals where we pay our respects to the dead. They are cabaret." That may be over the top, as is Professor Schmidt's call for an absolute prohibition of cremation, but both give pause for thought.

■ There is a great deal to like about Noah Feldman's *Divided by God: America's Church-State Problem and What We Should Do About It* (FSG, 306 pages, \$25). Not the title, to be sure, which runs counter to Feldman's argument that religion need not be divisive, and there is no suggestion that he thinks God wills division. Since the American founding, he writes, "we have been trying to construct a single nation," and he hopes his book will contribute to that construction. Feldman, who teaches law at New York University and is a fellow of the Washington-based New American Foundation, exercises civility and restraint in addressing our current culture wars, created in large part, he believes, by the "legal secularism" that has in recent decades favored a "naked public square." Feldman is more than generous in describing my influence in current religious-cultural-political reconfigurations, and there is much on which we agree; notably on the hash of incoherent no-establishment doctrines promulgated by the

Supreme Court. Feldman's central proposal is this: "Offer greater latitude for public religious discourse and religious symbolism, and at the same time insist on a stricter ban on state funding for religious institutions and activities. . . . If no one is being coerced by the government, and if the government is not spending its money or other resources on religious institutions and practices, the courts should hold that the Constitution is not violated." His position is summed up as "no coercion and no money." There is much to be said for that position, except Feldman would also prohibit government aid to citizens in, for instance, exercising the right of parental choice in education, which may indirectly benefit religious schools. While generally trying to calm unwarranted alarms about the dangers of religion in public life, on the question of education vouchers Feldman generates unconvincing alarms of his own. The author is thoroughly confused about the Catholic understanding of natural law reasoning (which at one point he identifies as canon law), and gets things exactly backwards when he says that Catholics joined evangelical Protestants who he apparently thinks first opposed the unlimited abortion license imposed by *Roe*. Nevertheless, *Divided by God* is a welcome contribution. It joins Philip Hamburger's important book of three years ago, *Separation of Church and State*, in a growing literature aimed at persuading militant secularists that their hostility to religion and religiously-grounded morality in public is without support in the Constitution, undermines authentic democracy, and further marginalizes the liberalism they would advance—unless, of course, militant secularism is inseparable from their understanding of liberalism.

■ What you always thought you knew about Jews in America is more or less true, according to *Jewish Distinctiveness in America*, published by the American Jewish Committee. "Overall," we are told, "Jews are the most distinctive of all ethnic/racial and all religious groups." They are richer, more urban, in more high-status jobs, more highly educated, less likely to be divorced, have fewer children, and are strikingly more secular and liberal, especially on controverted social questions. Their mean age (not meaning the age at which they stop being nice) is 47.7. Only liberal Protestants are older, at 50.8, with evangelicals at 45.2 and Catholics at 43.1. There are all kinds of odd findings in the report. For instance, Jews are at the very bottom among ethnic groups in expecting that the standard of living of their children will be better than their own, and next to the bottom in believing that people get ahead mainly by hard work. (Polish Americans are at the bottom on the latter scale. Go figure.) Israel is a big

factor in accentuating Jewish distinctiveness. "For other groups the 'old country' tie is progressively lost across time and generations, and under the American immigration pact it is considered disloyal to maintain an allegiance to another country. But it is considered natural and acceptable for Jews, as a religious group, to have connections to and strong, positive feelings toward Israel (up to the line that Jonathan Pollard crossed)." Pollard, it will be remembered, is an American citizen who was convicted of espionage against the U.S. on behalf of Israel. As for changes over the last thirty years, they are chiefly that more Jews are marrying non-Jews, with the result that fewer children are being reared Jewishly, and that Jews are, as a group, growing older. There is little that surprises in *Jewish Distinctiveness in America*, but the American Jewish Committee and I thought you might want to know.

■ Set aside for a moment where you stand on the death penalty. It is the reasoning of the Supreme Court in *Roper v. Simmons* that is of great interest. It violates the Eighth Amendment's proscription of "cruel and unusual" punishment, the Court ruled, to execute people who committed murder when they were less than eighteen years old. The case at hand was a seventeen-year-old who bragged to his buddies that he could get away with it because he was a minor, and then broke into a woman's home, put duct tape over her eyes and mouth, wrapped her head in a towel, tied her up with electrical wire, and then threw her off a railroad trestle into a river where she drowned. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote for the 5-4 majority that in recent years a "national consensus" has formed against the death penalty for minors. In fact, of the thirty-eight states that have capital punishment, eighteen bar the execution of those under age eighteen. Kennedy invoked "evolving standards of decency" and cited "the overwhelming weight of international opinion against the juvenile death penalty." If true, what that has to do with interpreting the U.S. Constitution is not addressed. Kennedy's opinion is that of a sociologist, psychologist, and free-lance moralist, not of a justice of the Supreme Court, although the distinction is by now very fuzzy. Kennedy writes that "any parent knows" and "scientific and sociological studies" show that people under eighteen have a "lack of maturity" and an "underdeveloped sense of responsibility" and susceptibility to "negative influences" along with a weak sense of "cost-benefit analysis." Remembering when I was under eighteen, I cannot but agree. I know a great many people who are over eighteen of whom the same might be said. Interestingly, the Court does not think these factors are pertinent to a woman under eighteen disposing of the child in her womb. Since I am generally opposed

to the death penalty, I do not object to the conclusion of *Roper v. Simmons*. But the arguments offered by the Court, along with counter-arguments, belong in the legislative chambers of the country. *Roper* is yet another in a long list of judicial usurpations of the political process, of which *Roe v. Wade* is the most consequential. This is outlaw law, legally effective but not morally binding. There will yet come a day, we must try to believe, when the people and their representatives will free judges from the arrogant delusion that they are the legislators of our laws and arbiters of our morals.

■ Early on in his pontificate, Pope Benedict met with representatives of major Jewish organizations and the discussion was most cordial. There is continuing Jewish anxiety, however, about the prospect of Pope Pius XII being beatified. "It is not for the Jewish community to tell the Catholic Church who its saints are," said Rabbi David Rosen, head of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee. But he added, "There would be very many within the Jewish world who would see the beatification of Pius XII as an act of intentional insensitivity." Intentional insensitivity is the most insidious kind.

■ On the sixtieth anniversary of the Normandy invasion, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict, reflected on the Christian alternative to both secularism and theocracy: "There is yet a third element of Christian tradition that I wish to mention, that, in the afflictions of our time, is of fundamental importance. Christian belief—following in the way of Jesus—has negated the idea of political theocracy. It has—to express it in modern terms—produced the worldliness of states, wherein Christians along with the adherents of other convictions live together in peace. Thus is distinguished the Christian belief that the Kingdom of God does not exist as a political reality, and cannot so exist, but rather, through faith, hope, and love is it attained, and the world transformed from within. But under the conditions of temporality, the Kingdom of God is no worldly empire, but rather, a call for the freedom of humanity and a support for reason that it may fulfill its own mission. The temptations of Jesus were ultimately about this distinction, about the rejection of political theocracy, about the relativity of states and reason's own law, as well as about the freedom to choose, which is meant for every person. In this sense, the secular state follows from a fundamental Christian decision, even if it required a long struggle to understand this in all its consequences. This worldly, 'secular' state incorporates, in its essence, the balance between reason and religion, which I have tried here to present. However, it stands against secularism as an ideology, which would,

as it were, construct the state from pure reason, released from all historical roots, and which can thus recognize no moral foundations that are not discernible to reason. All that is left it, in the end, is the positivism of the greatest number, and with it the abasement of right; ultimately, it is to be governed by a statistic. If the countries of the West were to commit wholly to this path, they could not indefinitely withstand the press of the ideologies and political theocrats. Even a secular state may—indeed, must—find its support in the formative roots from which it grew, it may and must acknowledge the foundational values without which it would not have come to be, and without which it cannot survive. Upon an abstract, an ahistorical reason, a state cannot endure."

■ Albert J. Raboteau, professor of religion at Princeton, became Orthodox later in life. Writing in the *Boston Review* about his ambivalent response to the role of religion in public life, he cites Father Alexander Schmemmann, whose work has received much attention in these pages. The Church, Schmemmann insisted, is not centered upon herself but is a missionary community "whose purpose is salvation not from, but of, the world." Raboteau writes: "To keep Christianity from being reduced to religion—just one more isolated compartment among the many that occupy the modern person's life (this, for Father Schmemmann, was the meaning of secularism)—it is essential to hold sight of the reality of the kingdom as present and as future. Secularism is not antireligious. It approves of religion by turning it into what Niebuhr called an 'idol,' one among others suited to our self-gratification. Secularism, in this sense, robs the Church of its eschatological dimension. It is no longer the primary community for us, the source of our life and our joy, but one more activity in a busy week, competing with work, social life, and entertainment. When the Church loses its awareness of the kingdom of God and its essential sacramentality, there develops (as Father Schmemmann writes) 'a peculiar divorce of the forms of the Church's life from their content, from that reality whose presence, power, and meaning they are meant to express and, as a consequence the transformation of those forms into an end in itself so that the very task of the Church is seen as the preservation of the 'ancient,' 'venerable,' and 'beautiful' forms, regardless of the 'reality' to which they refer.' The Church, in effect, becomes a museum of archaic artifacts and rituals, beautiful but inert. What is lost, and lost not through persecution but through our own inattention and inertia, is the 'very deep and essentially Orthodox experience of the Church as truly an epiphany: the revelation of, the participation in, a reality which because it is not 'of this

world' is given to us—'in this world'—in symbols. Hence the crucial importance of symbols in which we experience the reality of the Divine presence and action."

■ Kenneth Woodward, longtime religious writer for *Newsweek*, is nothing if not diligent. For a big special issue of *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* dealing with ethics and the media, Woodward assiduously combed every database to see how the *New York Times* has over the years dealt with abortion and, more specifically, partial-birth abortion. In July of last year, David Okrent, the paper's "public editor" (something like an ombudsman), asked in his column, "Is the *New York Times* a liberal newspaper?" To which he answered, "Of course it is." Woodward writes: "As evidence he cited not only the editorial page but also the *Times*' reporting, and the issues he chose were not economic but social—abortion, gay marriage, and the like. Citing the issue of same-sex marriage, Okrent found much in the way of 'implicit advocacy,' not only in what the *Times* reported but in what it did not. He then went on to observe that 'if you are among the groups the *Times* treats as strange objects to be examined on a laboratory slide (devout Catholics, gun owners, Orthodox Jews, Texans); if your value system wouldn't wear well on a composite *New York Times* journalist, then a walk through this paper can make you feel you're traveling in a strange and forbidding world.' Such frankness is rare among public editors." Woodward then examines in detail how, from 1995 on, the *Times* in its news reports employed evasions, mendacities, and linguistic games to avoid honest reporting on partial-birth abortion. When the phrase "partial-birth abortion" was used, it was accompanied by the claim that it is a political phrase employed by opponents of "reproductive rights." In fact, "partial-birth abortion" is in the medical dictionaries, and the American Medical Association supported a government ban on it—only the second time in 150 years that the AMA has endorsed legislation prohibiting any medical procedure. Undaunted, the *Times* editorially declares: "Partial birth' is a political battle cry, not medical terminology." Woodward concludes his essay with this: "Moving from the news pages to the editorial page it is hard to know which is the sound, which the echo. One of the values that newspapers are expected to uphold is the absolute separation between the editorial page and the news pages. At the *Times*, this independence of news from editorial is symbolized by housing editorial writers on one floor, reporters on another. Yet on the issue of 'partial-birth' abortion, those who edit the news and those who comment on it appear to be joined at the hip. This conclusion should not surprise long-

time readers of the *New York Times*. Nor am I under any illusion that the *Times* will, on this subject, rethink its one-dimensional newsroom practices, much less its constraining newsroom culture. A walk through the *Times*, as Okrent put it, can indeed make readers feel like 'you are traveling in a strange and forbidding world.' It is a strange world where 'women' carry 'fetuses' but where it is forbidden to ever write that 'mothers' carry 'babies.' This essay is about journalistic ethics, not the ethics of abortion. My purpose throughout has been to demonstrate that even at the highest levels of journalism, the demands of craft and the demands of ethics are braided and seldom separable. Language is where the two most often intertwine, and when ideology determines what is written as news, language and its integrity are the first to suffer."

■ In the same essay, Kenneth Woodward takes note, as have many others, of the terminological wars around abortion. Pro-abortionists call themselves pro-choice and anti-abortionists call themselves pro-life, but those terms are seldom used in the news media. The *Times* and others often refer to advocates of "abortion rights" or "reproductive rights," who are opposed by "anti-abortionists." The complaint is that the first are depicted as being *for* something while the latter are *against* something. I'm not so sure. I remember a conversation some years ago with the late James McFadden, founding editor of *Human Life Review*, in which he urged that we should take our cue from the anti-slavery movement of the nineteenth century and embrace being called anti-abortion. Yes, he agreed, "pro-life" sounds more "positive," but abortion, like slavery, is an unspeakable evil about which we ought to be unambiguously negative. He didn't entirely persuade me then, and I'm not entirely persuaded now. There is proven power in the pro-life language, especially among Christians—as in "the gospel of life." On the other hand, I've noticed that young people today are uninhibited in declaring themselves anti-abortion. And in some survey research there are people who don't call themselves pro-life, perhaps because of its political connotations, but declare themselves strongly opposed to abortion. We are used in funny ways by the language we use.

■ The ugly story of eugenics in America, and major American philanthropies supporting eugenics in Germany, is now being told in a number of recent books and articles. Christine Rosen's important contribution is to focus on the role of religion in the promotion of eugenics in her book *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement*. As Rosen demonstrates in devastating detail, the liberal

religious establishment was, in the first part of the twentieth century, solidly behind the pseudo-scientific movement to "improve the human stock" by breeding for excellence and eliminating the unfit. Some progressive Catholic thinkers also signed up with the cause. Philip Jenkins, reviewing Rosen in *Books & Culture*, writes: "Generally, though, the Catholic Church provided a firm bulwark against eugenic 'reform.' When in 1927 the U.S. Supreme Court famously upheld the sterilization of Carrie Buck, the lone dissenter was the court's one Catholic Justice, Pierce Butler. For liberals, such obstructionism proved yet again that the Catholic tradition could never truly be reconciled with secular democracy. As late as 1949, Paul Blanshard's *American Freedom and Catholic Power* ranted against Catholic willingness to allow defectives and even 'monsters' to be born alive, and to be viewed as full human beings." Quoting Chesterton, Jenkins observes that it was only adherence to traditional Christian doctrine that prevented the individual believer "from the degrading slavery of being a child of his age." Jenkins adds, "The next time someone posits a conflict between science and religion, it would be useful to recall the American experience with eugenics."

■ Oriana Fallaci is the—how should one put it?—outspoken Italian journalist who has been criminally charged with the "vilification" of a "religion admitted by the state." This makes her a vilipend, notes the *Wall Street Journal's* Tunku Varadarajan, who interviewed her in New York a few months ago where she was staying away from the Italian court. Her putative crime is to have said unflattering things about Islam. Following Bat Ye'or, she calls today's Europe "Eurabia." Her view of the future is almost unrelievedly grim. She says, "I feel less alone when I read the books of Ratzinger." Varadarajan writes, "I had asked Ms. Fallaci whether there was any contemporary leader she admired, and Pope Benedict XVI was evidently a man in whom she reposed some trust. 'I am an atheist, and if an atheist and a pope think the same things, there must be something true. It's that simple! There must be some human truth here that is beyond religion.'" Ms. Fallaci admired John Paul II, not least because he was a "warrior who did more to end the Soviet Union than even America," but she thought him altogether too weak on the Islamic invasion. Varadarajan continues: "The scant hopes that she has for the West she rests on his successor. As a cardinal, Pope Benedict XVI wrote frequently on the European (and the Western) condition. Last year, he wrote an essay titled 'If Europe Hates Itself,' from which Ms. Fallaci read this to me: 'The West reveals . . . a hatred of itself, which is strange and can only be considered pathological; the West . . . no longer loves itself;

in its own history, it now sees only what is deplorable and destructive, while it is no longer able to perceive what is great and pure.' *Ecco!* she says. A man after her own heart. *Ecco!* But I cannot be certain whether I see triumph in her eyes, or pain." (Yes, the quotation is from Pope Benedict's essay in this issue of FIRST THINGS, published here for the first time in English.)

■ Wasn't I going to say anything about Mario Cuomo's outdoing himself with an egregiously dumb op-ed piece in the *New York Times* a while back in favor of the laboratory exploitation of embryonic stem cells? No, as a matter of fact, I wasn't. Mr. Cuomo's occasional reappearances as a deep-thinking Catholic moralist have long been on a list of things politely ignored. But then there were these interesting letters in response to the Cuomo column, putting Peter Singer of Princeton and the pro-life office of the New York Catholic Conference solidly on the same side against Mr. Cuomo's claim that the crucial question is when human life begins. "Even the earliest embryo conceived of human parents is alive and a member of *Homo sapiens*," writes Singer. "Each of us has our origins in such an embryo. That is a fact of biology, not faith," writes Kathleen Gallagher of the pro-life office. Singer continues: "The crucial moral question is not when human life begins, but when human life reaches the point at which it merits protection. . . . Unless we separate these two questions—when does life begin, and when does it merit protection—we are unlikely to achieve any clarity about the moral status of embryos." Almost exactly right. I say "almost" because, while the questions can be distinguished, they cannot be separated. Long-term readers are familiar with Professor Singer from, *inter alia*, my debate with him at Colgate some while back (see "The Philosopher from Nowhere," February 2002). Singer has an intellectually complexified answer to the question of what human lives merit protection. He argues, for instance, that the life of an adult pig deserves protection more than that of a newborn human baby, and that parents should be free to kill their young children already born if they deem them unacceptably disabled. So, while Singer comes up with barbarously wrong answers, he comes close to posing the right question for public consideration: Given the biological fact that an embryo is a human being, what duty, if any, do we have to protect that life? And, if we say we have no such duty because that life is too small or too weak or too burdensome, how do we avoid extending that lethal logic to the monstrous conclusions espoused by Peter Singer? Prof. Singer has often said that he agrees with the pope on the question engaged in the debate over abortion, embryonic stem cell research, and mercy killing, and he has criticized the dishonesty

of those on his side of these issues for fudging the moral logic entailed in their position. On that he is entirely right.

■ There is this fussy rule in the reviewing business that anyone who has given a blurb for a book is disqualified from reviewing it. We here at FIRST THINGS refuse to be bound by it. It is one of those petty rules that provide a patina of moral scrupulosity for an otherwise unscrupulous enterprise. There can be real conflicts of interest. If, for instance, the author is your best friend, your boss, your client, or your brother-in-law, we don't want you to review the book. But if you sincerely and disinterestedly praised the book in a blurb, it might be interesting to know why you thought it worthy of praise. Along with, of course, whatever you think is wrong with it. To continue to like a book that you liked upon first reading, even if the first reading was cursory, is no conflict of interest. Thus I do not hesitate to say that I continue to like, in fact I like even more, Alan Jacob's *The Narnian*, of which I say on the dustjacket, "As C.S. Lewis helped make sense of so much for so many, Alan Jacobs helps make sense of C.S. Lewis. The most influential Christian apologist of the last hundred years has found a worthy biographer." Upon a closer reading, however, I see better what Jacobs means when he says that this is not a biography in the usual sense of the word. It does not follow a strict chronology and he omits many details that can be found in other books on Lewis. The subtitle catches the idea of the book, *The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, with the discussion of the life in service to understanding the imagination. It is quite the most satisfying book on Lewis that I have read, and I think I've read most of them. *The Narnian* helpfully corrects misunderstandings that have gained wide currency. For instance, the claim of A.N. Wilson and others that Lewis gave up Christian apologetics after being devastatingly defeated in debate with the philosopher G.E.M. Anscombe is decisively debunked. Jacobs explains how Lewis over time came to be uneasy with his reputation as an undefeatable debater, and indeed with the whole idea of "proving" Christian truths by scoring points. From his Belfast childhood on, Lewis' thought and writing was permeated by a yearning, a longing, an intimation of the most real, and this intimation he called "joy." Hence the title of his most autobiographical work, *Surprised by Joy*. The trajectory of his life and imagination, Jacobs insists, is always on the way to eternal life, "the country never yet visited." Narnia whets the appetite for what is to be, and that appetite, that longing, is the mark of living wonder-fully on this side of that far country. Jacobs is deeply respectful of Lewis but stops far short of being uncritically reveren-

tial. He was perhaps more sharply critical in some of his earlier writing, such as "The Second Coming of C.S. Lewis" (FT, November 1994). In the present book, he distances himself from Lewis' turn against modernity, and especially the literary moderns (Eliot, Joyce, Proust, Woolf, *et al.*), and one wishes Jacobs had explained more fully why he thinks, as he apparently does think, that turn was not necessary to Lewis' entire project. But he will probably never tell us since, as he writes in his preface, "I will never, ever write another word about C.S. Lewis." That is a pity, because many others will continue to write about Lewis and the conversation will be diminished by the absence of Alan Jacobs. Whether or not it was his last word on the subject, we can be grateful for *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*.

■ In the course of a talk on faith and culture at Fairfield University, Bishop William Lori of Bridgeport, Connecticut, addressed the oft-heard view that "it doesn't matter what religion you belong to, we all worship the same God." He said: "Such a remark sells every religion short. It implies that while we have to be discerning about other aspects of life, we do not have to be religiously discerning as all religions are equally valid. In this conception, salvation and eternal life fade into murkiness. This does not lead to a greater toleration of religion but to its dismissal as pointless or as dangerous since absolute religious relativism is powerless to critique degenerate forms of religion. It is far more respectful for Christians to bring their universal claims, that is, the wisdom of the cross, to the table of interreligious dialogue and prayer rather than to check them at the door. Those very claims enable us to recognize the truths that other religions embody and their points of contact with the divine. In turn, we are better able to see how other religions can enrich the Christian proclamation without diluting it. As mentioned earlier, relativism is often seen as just the right attitude for living in a democracy where presumably everyone has a right to be heard in the public square. And indeed, that is to some extent true, but it is not absolutely true. There are foundational truths and values upon which a just, humane, and cohesive society rests and without which it becomes a destructive force for its own citizens and for the world order."

■ "The delusional is no longer marginal, and we err on the side of folly if we continue to grant the boon of tolerance to people who mean to do us harm in the conviction that they receive from Genesis the command 'to take dominion over the earth,' to build the Kingdom of God, to create the Christian Nation. The proposition is as murderous as it is absurd." That is editor Lewis

Lapham in an issue of *Harper's* devoted to the threat of conservative Christians in the public square. The issue contains two long slash-and-burn articles by reporters who visited the aliens living in Colorado Springs, a center of evangelical megachurches and parachurch organizations. Not surprisingly, they found and enthusiastically highlight some loopy "Dominionists" and "Reconstructionists" who think our constitutional order should be replaced by a society based on "Bible law." Lapham's politics of paranoia notwithstanding, such people are in fact very marginal and in no way representative of the evangelical insurgency in public life. It is not without interest, however, that an old liberal standby such as *Harper's* declares it folly to "grant the boon of tolerance" to fellow-citizens with whom it disagrees. "Boon," be it noted, denotes a benefit or a favor. One has to wonder what has happened to liberalism's devotion to rights. But perhaps one should not make too much of this. Mr. Lapham has a very long paper trail testifying to his excitability. On the other hand, many might view *Harper's* as a venerable institution of the American establishment. Established in 1850, it has a circulation of over 200,000, and has published worthies such as Henry James, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Woodrow Wilson, and Winston Churchill. In its publicity, however, it boasts only one writer of note in the last half century, Seymour Hersch writing on the My Lai massacre. That was a very long time ago. Some while back, *Harper's* was going belly up and was rescued by the far-left MacArthur Foundation, which now owns the magazine. Nonetheless, it should not go unremarked that a publication that has a reserved perch on "the commanding heights of culture" (Marx) declares that tolerance is a boon that liberalism should no longer grant to conservative Christians. I would not be surprised if, by searching diligently, one could find a Dominionist nut in Colorado Springs who favors banning *Harper's*. Lewis Lapham is in very strange company.

■ The response to the changes at FIRST THINGS' website has been beyond expectations. For regular updat-

ings with news and commentary, please check out [www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com).

■ Christianity is not a mythology or source of elevating spiritual insights. Historical particularity is all, which is nicely underscored by the following "Proclamation of the Birth of Christ" from the Roman Martyrology for Christmas Mass:

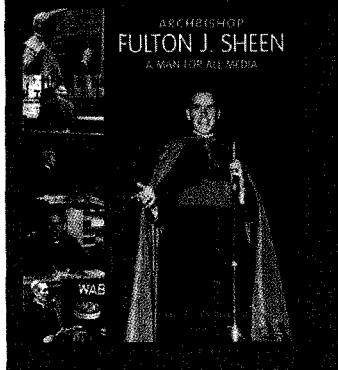
The twenty-fifth day of December.  
In the five thousand one hundred and ninety-ninth  
year of the creation of the world  
from the time when God in the beginning created the  
heavens and the earth;  
the two thousand nine hundred and fifty-seventh year  
after the flood;  
the two thousand and fifteenth year  
from the birth of Abraham;  
the one thousand five hundred and tenth year  
from Moses  
and the going forth of the people of Israel from Egypt;  
the one thousand and thirty-second year  
from David's being anointed king;  
in the sixty-fifth week according to the prophecy of  
Daniel;  
in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;  
the seven hundred and fifty-second year from the  
foundation of the city of Rome;  
the forty-second year of the reign of Octavian  
Augustus;  
the whole world being at peace  
in the sixth age of the world,  
Jesus Christ the eternal God and Son of the eternal  
Father,  
desiring to sanctify the world by his most merciful  
coming,  
being conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
and nine months having passed  
since his conception,  
was born in Bethlehem of Judea  
of the Virgin Mary,  
being made flesh.

**Sources:** Are Jews Smarter? *New York* magazine, October 24.

**While We're At It:** Reese rumpus, *Columbia Journalism Review*, November/December. Personal growth unacceptable in Riverside, *Wall Street Journal*, October 28. Meilaender on moral education, *Imprimis*, October. Dean on Auden, *New York Sun*, October 13. Opus Dei, *New York Sun*, October 26. Benedict XVI on *Nostra Aetate*, letter, October 27. Hello, Catholics, *Commonweal*, November 4. Good pope/bad pope, *Commonweal*, July 15. Lawler on Brooks, *Intercollegiate Review*, Fall/Winter. Marty on Hauerwas, *Con-*

*text*, May. Roper v. Simmons, George Will's column, March 6. Anxiety over possible Pius XII beatification, Catholic News Service, June 9. Ratzinger on the secular state, *Logos*, Spring 2005. Raboteau on the Church, *Boston Review*, April/May. What we've always known about the *New York Times*, *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* 19:2. Eugenics in America, *Books & Culture*, July/August 2004. Oriana Fallaci, *Wall Street Journal*, June 23. Peter Singer gets something right, *New York Times*, June 23. Bishop Lori on orthodox ecumenism, *Origins*, November 3. No tolerance for evangelicals, *Harper's*, May.

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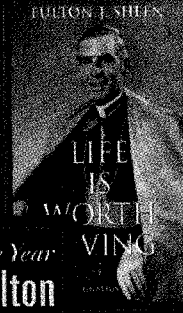
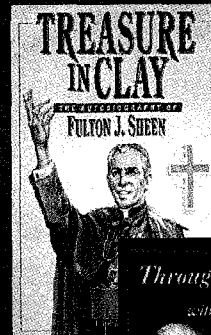
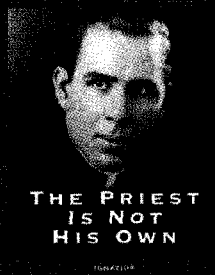
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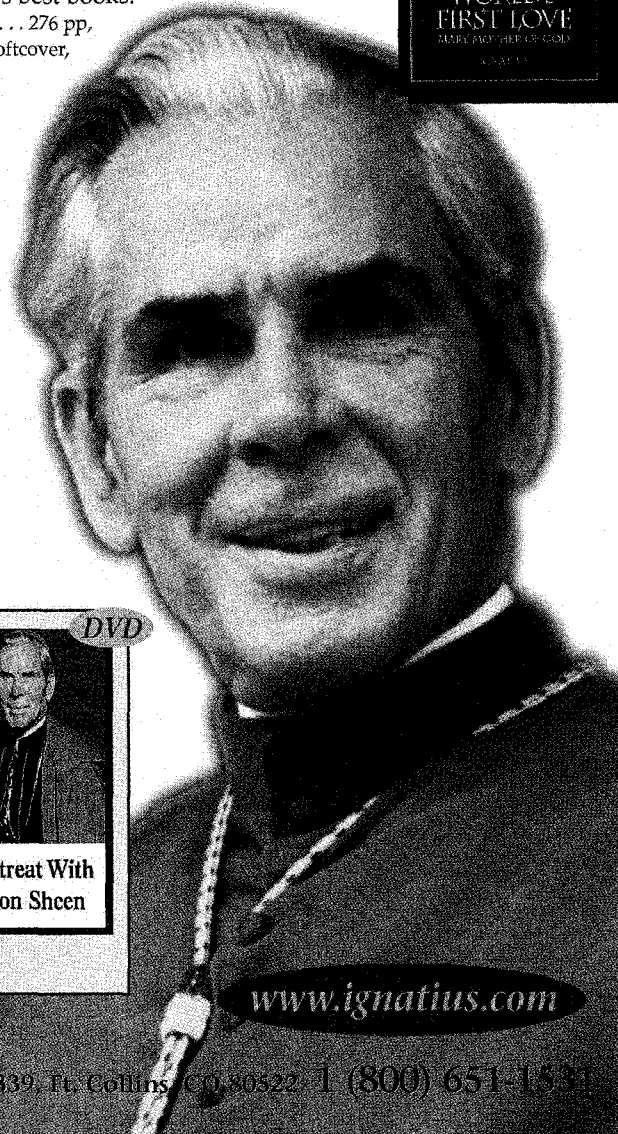
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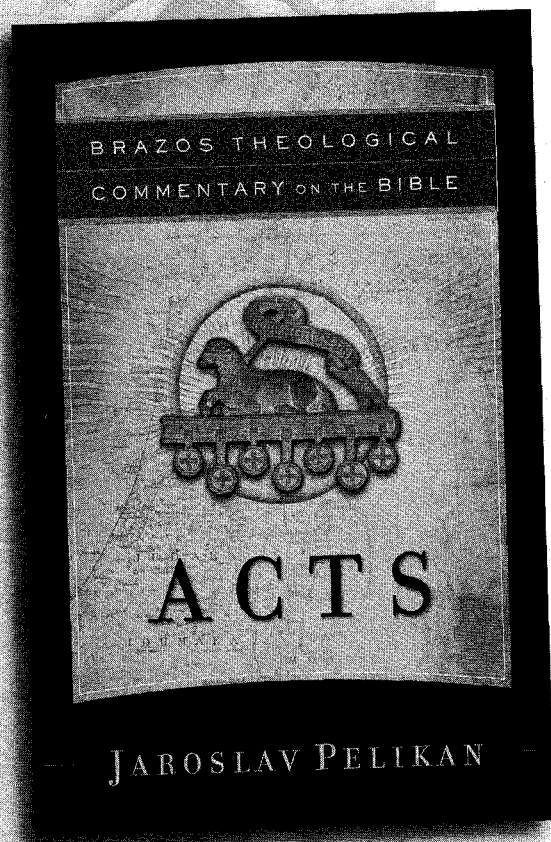
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